THE AMERICAN REVIEW

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THE LURE OF CALIFORNIA

NIETZSCHE IN AMERICA
By Allan Bloom

THE PREDICAMENT OF LIBERALISM
A Symposium

TEACHING BUSINESSMEN ETHICS
By Robert Coles

A Great Rift in the Land

The San Andreas Fault, separating two huge plates of the Earth's crust, is a dominant feature of the California landscape (see map on page 26) and a center of earthquake activity. As a result, the state's preeminent universities, such as the California Institute of Technology, have become leaders in seismological research, serving scientists around the world.



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COVER: *The San Francisco skyline at sunset. For a panorama of California, see the special section beginning page 24. Photograph © 1987 Lawrence Migdale/Photo Researchers.*

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THE PREDICAMENT OF LIBERALISM:

A Symposium

Two decades of attack from within and without have damaged the credibility of American liberals. How serious is their plight?

From the mid-1940s until the mid-1960s, there was a coalition and a consensus in American society presided over by what political scientists called the "Liberal Establishment." Generally speaking, that consensus encompassed an internationalist orientation, a belief in Keynesian economics and Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal social policies, and a patriarchal domination by white Protestants of Anglo-Saxon ethnic origin. In the 1960s and '70s, the counterculture, the women's movement and various left-wing groups began tearing the coalition apart. By the late 1970s and early '80s, the populist tax revolt and cultural conservatism led devastating attacks from the Right. What really happened—and why? Nathan Gardels, editor of New Perspectives Quarterly, *leads a discussion on these questions by four intellectuals generally considered to be liberals (although Daniel Bell qualifies as a neoconservative on some issues). Political scientist Walter Dean Burnham of MIT is the author of* The Current Crisis in American Politics *(1982). Michael Sandel, a professor of government at Harvard, has written two influential books in the past five years,* Liberalism and the Limits of Justice *and* Liberalism and Its Critics. *Harvard sociology professor Daniel Bell is perhaps best known for his 1973 book,* The Coming of the Post-Industrial Society.

DANIEL BELL: There are many different dimensions to the so-called Liberal Establishment, and also to the question of what succeeds it.

First of all, the *Liberal Establishment* is an amorphous term that mixes in different things. It may mean the New Class proposition of Irving Kristol that we are dominated by the liberal professionals; or the Old Left view that we were dominated by the eastern Republicans of Wall Street. Both are seen as part of the Liberal Establishment.

Then, there is the more specific reference to the development of a political class that was blown apart by the Reagan wing of the Republican party, which came to power opposing that political class's fading authority.

It is probably most useful in the context of this discussion to talk about a political class. For example, when Richard Nixon used to attack the Liberal Establishment, he was voicing resentment of this liberal political class, although, ironically, he drew from it in the person of Henry Kissinger.

A political class is a group of individuals from a similar social stratum, with like-minded views and a sense of responsibility for governance. There can be quite sharp disagreements on political issues, often discrediting one side or the other, but the class maintains the continuity of society. In England when Chamberlain was discredited, Churchill stepped forward. This country never had a truly political class until we began to develop one after World War II.

There have now been two generations of this class. The first was the Wall Street group [who served in government positions during World War II]—people like [Henry] Stimson, with Nelson Rockefeller on the political side. The second generation consisted of professional elites who joined the public service [after the war]—McGeorge Bundy, Walt Rostow. The Vietnam War was undertaken by that nascent political class. It tested them and they failed.

Now, looking at the question of leadership and the elites that may emerge on the basis of social and political attitudes, this becomes difficult to translate into specific political terms because there are two axes. One is an economic axis divided by the Left and the Right. The other is a cultural axis divided by traditionalist and modernist. Abortion and school prayer are fixed along the cultural axis.

Furthermore, those who are left or right on the economic issues are not always left-modern and right-traditionalist on the cultural issues. For example, the working class complicates a possible alignment today. Blue-collar workers may be "left" on economic issues, but pro-Reagan and

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From *New Perspectives Quarterly*. © 1987 Institute for National Strategy, Los Angeles, California.

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for traditional cultural values. At the same time, there are eastern Republicans and California entrepreneurs who are very "right" on economic issues, yet culturally modern or libertarian.

Walter Dean Burnham: The New Deal era was ideal for maintaining both permissive and traditional values. Most of today's issues were inconceivable as national issues. The federal government did not make any demands on private morality, pornography or other cultural themes. Abortion had not been nationalized. Even in the 1920s and '30s, when there was a great deal of economic liberalism and even radicalism, the culture was profoundly conservative.

It was only after World War II that the liberalization of the culture occurred and cultural issues were politicized. I suspect it had much to do with the cultural contradictions of tradition and modernity being woven into the economic contradictions of accumulation versus consumption. The upheaval on tradition and community caused by affluence, as well as the Keynesian emphasis on credit and consumption-led growth, spilled over into the culture. If restraints were off on the economic side, why not in one's personal life?

Also, at a time when the American economy was hegemonic throughout the world—[when it generated the] tremendous growth rates of the postwar period—business elites were satisfied with their terrific profits while the well-being of the average American was rising as well.

Now, cultural issues and economic issues are mixed together in politics with alternating importance and even substitutability. When the economy is bad, that's the issue. When the economy is good, something else is the issue.

In the 1920s, the early '50s and now in the '80s, the economic issues are not front and center. Efforts to propose alternatives fall apart because there is either prosperity or no apparent threat to prosperity. In periods like this, when society is constantly undergoing stress linked to economic and technological progress under affluence, and because of the amorphous quality of our politics, religious and conservative revitalization movements come to the fore.

If we ask ourselves what is likely to occur today, we can look to previous conservative revitalization movements that appeared at times of stress and readjustment. In good old populist American fashion, William Jennings Bryan united the victims of the 1893-94 economic collapse, and then in 1925 was the fundamentalist defender of creationism at the Scopes Monkey Trial.

In the 1920s, modernity came in wholesale with the shift to a largely urban society. With the rise of secularism and science, the age-old conflict between science and religion acted itself out over evolution. In fact the present decade reminds me a lot of the 1920s.

What also happens is that issues with an important economic reach can be transubstantiated into symbolic or religious issues; Reagan's talk of a Christian nation and the cultural conservatives' response to the relative decline of the United States in the world economy by invoking patriotic imagery from the 1950s are examples.

Life was simpler in the 1930s. There was general economic disaster and a sense that government was part of the answer, not the problem. That alternative seems to be foreclosed today; so many turn to some sort of God—seeking to solve the problems in their lives.

Bell: To tie these shifts back into the question of the fallen authority of the Establishment, we must start from the widest social context—the breakup of White Anglo-Saxon Protestant hegemony.

The breakup of WASP dominance came after World War II for a number of reasons. Discrimination against Jews broke down and Jews then performed one of the most remarkable feats of social mobility in history. There was the civil-rights movement, which actively brought blacks into society.

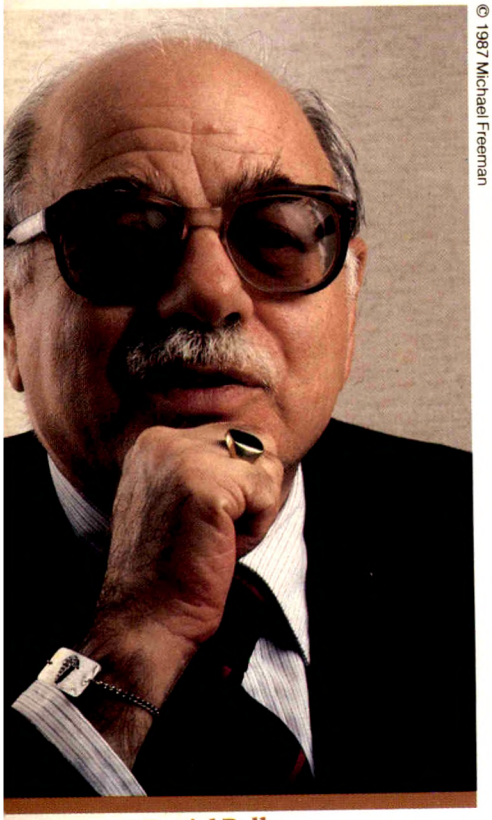
The 1960s helped bring an end to patriarchy. Beginning in this period, the number of women going to work contributed substantially to the breakup of male domination. The very phrase *proper role of women* is unlikely to be used today.

In a sense, the general questioning of authority spreads from this changing role of women. If the oldest forms of social authority are questioned, then all forms of authority are open to question.

Burnham: The woman's role is now regarded as a matter of choice. If it is a matter of choice, there can be no proper role and, therefore, no valid moral sanction in trying to apply standards of that kind. This now applies across the board on a whole range of questions having to do with authority, respect, duty and what is "proper."

Bell: The status of women, then, is the one culturally fundamental, structural change that marks a departure from the past. It is the one irreversible element. A lot can be reversed: even black gains, which may be split, with a substantial black middle class in contrast to a disoriented and much larger underclass. The politics of the future will have to come to terms with this permanent change in the status of women, which is also reflected in the labor market.

Burnham: The change in women's roles also has economic consequences tied to the decay of American economic hegemony over time. Americans don't want to go backward; they don't want to give up the American Dream. Today, the American Dream requires two wage earners in the family.



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Daniel Bell

The massive movement of women into the work force also means that women are more heavily concentrated in the health and public-sector professions than are men. Since nurturing professions like health and teaching are heavily dependent on public funding, women have a greater need for government. This is one thing the Republicans will have to consider in their wholehearted attempt to demolish the social-support role of the state.

Finally, women are more economically independent because they are bringing in their own incomes. This really changes things from the good old days.

Bell: The changing status of women is fascinating from a sociological angle. Women are the only rising middle-class group in America, because of their previous status and because of the opportunities open to them. For example, in the next 15-20 years, half of the university professoriate on the permanent-tenure level may be women. In basic numbers, the new professional-technical class is a women's class. Eighty percent of all new jobs since 1980 have been occupied by women. According to current labor-force data, the whole new middle class is basically a women's movement.

This unrealized fact has many implications about what kind of society we will have and what kind of stake women have in it. Many women are increasingly dependent upon caring functions outside of the home in order to be able to go to work. Services like child care depend upon government expenditures or nonprofit institutions. And, as already mentioned, proportionally, large numbers of women are going into public or nonprofit sectors. The group has not yet crystallized, but they are a potent element of any future equation of power.

Burnham: Here again we see the political transubstantiation that cross-cuts constituencies. Issues such as sexual preference or abortion intersect with the deeply held religious commitments of others who are in the same economic situation. Since these preferences are nonnegotiable, they distort classic expectations of left and right, or of party allegiance.

Similar issues undermined the integrity of the Democratic coalition. Now the Republicans will have their turn. They will have to deal with tensions between people who are economically orthodox but culturally permissive on the one hand, and the religious-cultural Right on the other.

Bell: Although the rise of women is independent of the fall of the Liberal Establishment per se, the two come together to the extent that the elite group's general authority came under question at the deepest social level, which also created a focus for other kinds of resentment.

This is why the crisis of the political class becomes so important. The political class is the overt spearpoint of the Establishment. When that class failed—stumbled and simply fell apart over Vietnam—then there was no one to defend the notion of an Establishment. Who today defends the notion of an Establishment? Nobody.

And of course, without an Establishment, who carries forward the continuity of the society? Without continuity there is no stability. Without stability, people don't know what to expect.

This failure of the directing political class helped to blur the salience of economic and cultural issues in politics. This happens when people have lost their reference points and society feels adrift from its moorings.

This failure of elites to exercise authority is the most troubling residue of the great social changes in the postwar period. The notion of authority in the social sense is pretty much gone in this country. That's why we have the rule of celebrity, of notoriety and personality.

If the 1970s saw a revolt against authority, the 1980s are seeing a revolt against modernity—a strong cultural current that has been gathering force worldwide. If there is a common thread to this revolt against modernity, it is the emphasis on continuity and tradition, and a reaction against secularism and the universalism that was the utopia of the Enlightenment.

The history of American politics and culture is the recurrent tension between traditionalism and modernity. Traditionalism has its roots in the small-town life of America and its fundamentalist Protestantism. Modernity is the expression of liberal and cosmopolitan attitudes in the cities.

Paradoxically, the reaction to modernity can only be contained by the restoration, not of social authority, but by both the earned authority of the political class and the moral authority of the Establishment.

Michael Sandel: Our predicament goes back to the New Deal. The



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Walter Dean Burnham

strategy of Franklin D.Roosevelt and the New Deal was to rival the concentration of power in the national economy with a similar concentration of power in the federal government.

This theory of countervailing power, however, did not stand alone. It was coupled with a political theory that had been part of progressive politics from the early part of the 20th century. The New Dealers drew the insight from Progressives that, to build a modern democracy, it was not enough to centralize government, it was also necessary to nationalize politics. That project is now exhausted, and we are struggling to find out why, and what might take its place. But it is important to appreciate how politically ambitious an undertaking such a project was.

In order for democratic control to be effectively located at the level of the nation, it was not enough to develop new structures and institutions, but also, through political education, to recast the meaning of democratic citizenship on a new scale. A sense of national citizenship had to be cultivated to underwrite and legitimate the extended involvements of centralized government and national economic institutions.

FDR appreciated the need to cultivate a new kind of citizenship. Insofar as people drew their collective identity from public life, it was important that they conceive the community as located not simply in neighborhoods, small towns and even cities, but primarily in the nation. The nation would become the first source of collective identity and allegiance—the primary political community. So, the New Deal public philosophy had two parts—to centralize government, and also to enlarge the meaning of citizenship, to nationalize politics.

The exhaustion of the New Deal liberal agenda has come with the success of the first part of the project, but the failure of the second part. It failed because the nation proved too vast a scale across which to cultivate the shared understandings and common involvements necessary to political community in the traditional sense. Except in extraordinary times, such as World War II or the Great Depression, or in such fleeting moments of collective crisis as the Iranian hostage situation, it is difficult for Americans to see themselves as participants in a shared national identity. Gradually this realization set in, yet the structures of economic and political life were already inescapably located at the level of the nation—and even beyond it.

Burnham: And, of course, without a national citizenship, the structures were bound to become illegitimate, as they have become.

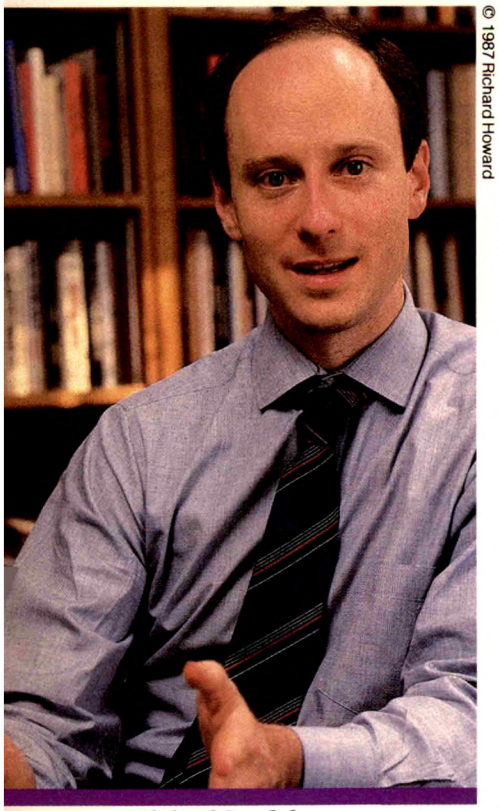
Sandel: There was for a time, and there is now, an attempt to legitimate national institutions without national citizenship. Rather than a national political community of shared purposes, the other legitimating aspiration has been the ideal of the "neutral state."

The *neutral state* is the idea that the vast social, political and economic arrangements of the welfare state should draw their justification not from the idea that the nation embraces a shared conception of the good, but instead from the idea that a just society is one that does not try to impose on its citizens any particular conception of the good. A neutral state does not try to cultivate civic virtue. Nor does it tie the obligations of the welfare state to a sense of national community or civic engagement. It seeks instead a framework of rights that is neutral among competing conceptions of the good life. Individuals and groups are simply left to pursue their own interests and values as long as they are consistent with similar liberties for others.

Burnham: This was basically the notion of "interest-group liberalism" in political science. Such a politics was entirely process-oriented and uninterested in substantive results that might benefit some sectors of the society over others. The system maintained its legitimacy as groups were satisfied through marginal and incremental adjustments.

One of our great problems today is that the game continues. The process of groups coming back again and again for another slice of bread has been institutionalized in the "iron triangle" of lobbyists, insiders and legislators—the interest-group Liberal Establishment against which populism has revolted.

Sandel: This is symptomatic of the inability to cultivate a national citizenship capable of sustaining a shared notion of the common good. The ide-



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Michael Sandel

al of the neutral state seemed the only alternative.

At the level of legislative politics, the neutral state takes the form of interest-group pluralism—the idea that there is no public good apart from the preferences of individuals and the interests of such groups as may organize to press their claims.

Burnham: *Public interest* was viewed as a metaphysical term that couldn't really be applied in practical politics....

Sandel: ...where the public interest is no more than a disconnected collection of individual interests.

But the welfare state has been sustained not only by interest-group bargaining at the legislative level. There is also a judicial expression in Supreme Court decisions and in administrative agency rulings concerning rights and entitlements.

These decisions often enforce the idea that government may not favor one conception of the good over others. So there has been an aspiration to neutrality both in the principles that define the individual rights and in the policies that result from interest-group liberalism.

What is striking, then, is that the welfare state has two legitimating ideals—an original one and a new one that increasingly predominates. The original one was that the welfare state expresses the mutual obligations we owe as fellow citizens who share a common life. That is the one that has receded and lost much of its force, although it is not completely dead. The new one is the idea of public provision of rights and entitlements for the sake of freeing people to pursue their own interests and ends.

Burnham: Perhaps the old New Deal was neutral in the sense that everyone got the same specific thing while Great Society programs of the 1960s targeted specific groups to get specific things.

Much of the Reagan revolution was, in fact, to do away with the Great Society, not the New Deal. The Great Society was one of the few great policy revolutions in modern times that had no concrete referent in what public opinion wanted. The revolution begat the counterrevolution at the level of activist politics.

My parallel point concerns making the state both strong enough to do its job and democratically legitimate enough to develop nationalized citizenship. To show how far we've gone in the exact opposite direction, we are unable to find a national politics of any kind in the 1986 elections. Nothing links the variety of campaigns together at the gubernatorial or local levels. That is the empirical result of having no public philosophy.

The neutral-state idea breaks down because the pressure of built-up change requires policies that are very hard to justify in terms of neutrality. If we want to do something in the general interest—like an industrial policy in which some zero-sum decisions must be made—we don't have the mechanism to develop a national consensus. The paradox paralyzes us.

Sandel: There is a sense in which the ideal of the neutral state is the public philosophy. The question is whether it is an adequate philosophy.

That the neutral state is the reigning public philosophy can be seen in the fact that it is not the sole philosophy of one party or the other. On the contrary, it underlies the political argument between the two parties and sets the terms of debate.

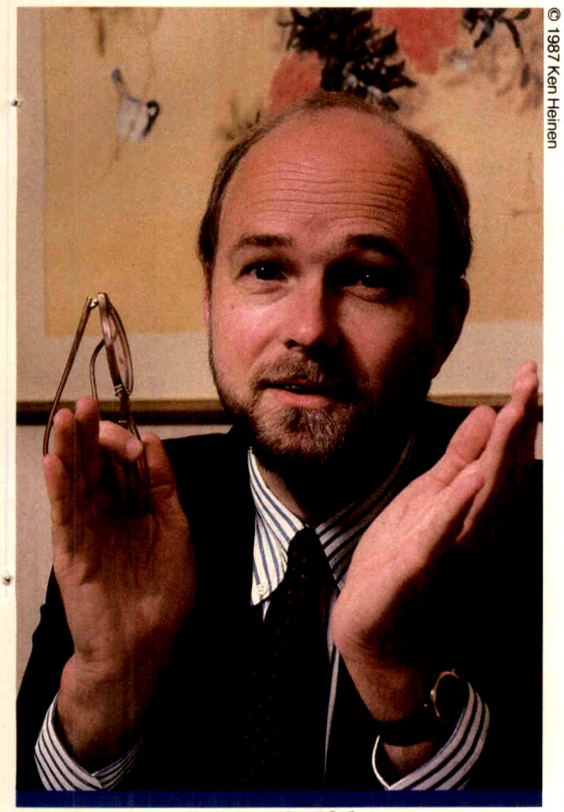
For example, the political debate between the Democrats and the Republicans in the decades since the New Deal has increasingly become a debate between rights-oriented egalitarians, commonly known as liberals, and rights-oriented libertarians, or conservatives. What they disagree over is which rights are necessary to realize the ideal of the neutral state. That's what divides them.

Rights-oriented egalitarian liberals defend the welfare state on the grounds that we need to provide people with social and economic rights in order to respect their dignity as autonomous agents capable of choosing their own preferred lives.

On the other hand, rights-oriented libertarians say that property rights and the efficient functioning of the market economy will best allow individuals to choose their own conception of the good.

What both sides in this debate fail to address is the growing sense in the electorate that, notwithstanding the expansion of individual rights and entitlements in recent decades, we're less in control of the forces that govern our lives rather than more. And this, it seems to me, is the source of much of the frustration with the prevailing political agenda.

The rise of populist frustrations had to do with the erosion of a sense of community and, with it, a perceived erosion of democratic possibilities. The post-World War II generation that was weaned on unrivaled American power in the world, and unprece-


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Nathan Gardels

dented opportunities for consumption at home, now finds that, individually and collectively, they are less in control of the forces that govern their lives than they had imagined.

NATHAN GARDELS: The point of cultural conservatives is precisely that the idea of the neutral state is insufficient. They argue that the traditional values and morals that made America great ought to be promoted by government if we are going to stem the social decay unleashed by the permissive, tolerant or, in your words, "rights-oriented" philosophy.

SANDEL: I completely agree that the insight of cultural conservatism has been to grasp the inadequacy of the public philosophy of the neutral state and to address questions of tradition and community in politics. But it is only a partial response because it fails to take account of the economic developments that led to the concentration of power in the bureaucratic state in the first place.

While the conservative critique has been alive to the concentration of power in the federal government, it has been blind to the effects of concentrations of power in the corporate economy. The Democratic party has been more responsive to the issue of concentrated economic power, but far less responsive to the consequences for democracy of the federal bureaucracy.

GARDELS: Cultural conservatives are trying to give a substantive conception to what the state ought to do. To quote [conservative leader] Paul Weyrich: "God's truth ought to be manifest politically"; or "Government should support moral truths."

SANDEL: The way to address the cultural conservatives is not, as many liberals do, to deny that politics has anything to do with morality, or to refuse to defend a substantive conception of the common good. That is a great weakness.

GARDELS: All right, but then what happens when we attempt to define what the common morality should be on a range of questions: abortion, homosexuality, parental authority, pornography, the role of women?

The absolutes for cultural conservatives are clear because they are given by God. They say, "Thou shalt not kill," therefore thou shalt not have an abortion. What does the wisdom of classical political theory have to say about that?

BELL: The conservatives are inconsistent. If they believe in the privatization of business, they should believe in the privatization of morals. If they don't want abortion, they should also be opposed to the death penalty.

SANDEL: The liberal reply to the Moral Majority [a lobbying group of religious conservatives] should not be to flee moral argument but to engage in it. The idea that the state shouldn't legislate morality is something that many liberals reflexively invoke. But what about the civil-rights laws? They legislated morality—a morality of inclusion that insisted on the full membership of a group wrongly excluded from the common life of the nation.

BURNHAM: But civil rights were directly the state's business—who gets to vote and doesn't get to vote. Even a libertarian would agree. However, if we're talking about bedroom issues of private sexual morality where legislation may be contemplated to get us back to God's truth, it's a different arena.

SANDEL: The cultural conservatives have too narrow a notion of the place of moral argument in politics. Abortion and pornography are not the only issues that invite moral reflection. What about broader questions of social and economic structures? We forget now that the central political question in the 1920s and '30s was how to reform the political economy so that democratic ideals could be preserved.

People like Justice Brandeis believed it was necessary to decentralize the power that had gathered in the corporate economy. Others argued that only centralized planning with a larger role for the state could preserve democratic government. It turned out that neither of these structural reforms prevailed.

What prevailed was Keynesian economics, which was neutral on the question of the good because it simply accepted preferences as revealed by consumers. Rather than reform the structure of the economy on the basis of some vision of the common good, the state would seek prosperity by managing aggregate demand.

BELL: I'm not sure I like the phrase *the common good*. It implies a unitary concept and, being a good liberal, I want to "reserve" a number of areas from such a conception.

I would substitute the phrase *the public good*. Civil rights, for example, are a matter of public access. They are part of a public good.

I see it this way not only as a liberal, but as a Jew. It is very worrisome when a particular conception from one tradition, as Weyrich suggests, is

imposed on the whole society. America was founded on the rejection of the idea that there is a unitary truth that can be imposed on the entire society. The wars of religion were, in effect, wars of truth. America traded that in for toleration, a notion far more important for a society than that of a single moral truth.

I also think the most important thing is to avoid the politicization of cultural issues. Economic issues and interests are negotiable. Since moral issues are nonnegotiable, they can only tear apart a society. The politicization of cultural issues has been one of the greatest dangers in recent years.

The notion of a common good implies a public debate on moral issues. I would prefer to expand the private space as a way of building a liberal and tolerant society.

SANDEL: If the only way of reintroducing substantive conceptions of the common good implies the imposition of unitary truths, then I'm against that too, but I don't think it is enough simply to invoke the distinction between the private and the public. What counts as private and what counts as public has long been the subject of political debate. It was once argued that sweatshops and child labor were "private" arrangements, not public concerns.

We can't escape making arguments about what properly counts as private and what counts as public, and the resolution of those arguments will ultimately depend on some moral conception of the common good.

BURNHAM: Well, it will depend on what balance of political forces develops on any particular issue.

SANDEL: But the legitimacy of the outcome will depend on the persuasiveness of the arguments—the moral arguments—that support it. To decide what is public and what is private requires some conception of the common good.

BURNHAM: I would also strive for maximum tolerance in these matters because they are not negotiable. They do tear away at the consensus in society to the extent they are propelled into the public arena in any way other than a neutral way.

I must also agree, however, that the problem is an enduring one. After all, do we have a state that stands for nothing? Until it bogged down and became exhausted, the old interest-group liberalism could claim its own process legitimacy—explosive issues were kept out of the public arena; public-sector activity was kept to tangential, negotiable relations among people, preferably those that could be put in terms of money.

SANDEL: I think that traditional positions between liberals and conservatives break down over questions of community and morality. Conservatives may be quick to say that the local community should decide about pornography but less ready to let the same community restrict plant closings. So the agenda should be larger than the one the religious Right puts forward.

It is also not clear that the state can succeed in depoliticizing cultural issues. The political influence of the religious Right is symptomatic of a public life so drained of common meanings that it is vulnerable to those who would interject their own moral conceptions to fill it.

A democratic conception of the public good would address itself precisely to this vulnerability that is the legacy of the neutral state. The discourse is so impoverished that when we debate "ethics in government," we're reduced to talking only about the private peccadillos of public officials.

GARDELS: I can see community-oriented liberals being comfortable with a city's deciding not to close a plant. I can't see them being comfortable with the banning of *Catcher in the Rye* from the school library.

SANDEL: It is unavoidable in a democracy that moral and political arguments be addressed to some particular community. The question is what are the relevant communities, and for which purposes?

We can no longer afford to take for granted that the answer to that question is, for all purposes, the nation state. And, if the price of that recognition is that communities will exercise their democratic prerogatives in ways we disagree with, then we need to organize better politically.

We will continue to insist on certain rights, but we can't avoid addressing the question of how to revitalize a sense of commitment and civic engagement in the various communities to which we belong and on which a vital democratic life depends.

GARDELS: Our definitions of the common good tend to be pretty vague once we leave the domain of public issues like plant closings and look at questions of right or wrong, or of character and virtue.

We can see the difficulty of trying to come up with values that aren't relative in this pluralistic society. Yet the disorienting fluidity of values is precisely what calls for a response. The idea of tolerance doesn't seem to do the trick. Tolerance is a vacuum, not an integrating principle.

SANDEL: It's not so much that tolerance is a vacuum; the problem is that tolerance is not self-interpreting or self-implementing as an ideal. Tolerance is no substitute for a vision of the common good; it presupposes one.

BELL: I dissent vigorously from the statement that tolerance is a vacuum. In political philosophy, the Aristotelian or Rousseauian view that a community requires a conception of a common good is quite right, but such a conception is premised on the principle of a homogeneous cultural community. Only a few countries approximate that kind of community today; every other society is a plural society.

This is why the Kantian conception of toleration and due process, a procedural republic, so to speak, becomes the sociological condition of civil order. The crucial political problem is how to maintain a functioning polity without the conformity of an imposed common good on the one hand, or a fragmentation of interests on the other.

BURNHAM: That is the predicament of liberalism. ♦

ARCHITECTS FOR THE 1980s

By Brian Dumaine

"This is the generation of American architects," proclaims Philip Johnson, at 80 the nation's foremost master builder. Now in their 30's and 40's, all have made their names young in a field where traditions of long apprenticeship favor the old. Some reinterpret history, often echoing the golden era of the 1930s skyscraper. Others create structures that vibrate with bold geometric shapes and brash colors. Still others strive to combine futuristic flair with historical detail.

Whatever their style, these men and women make beautiful buildings that are also sound investments commanding high resale prices. Says New York real-estate developer William Zeckendorf Jr.: "You can't put a dollar sign on it, but having a well-known architect design your building has everything to do with getting through the approval process and attracting tenants."

This article by Brian Dumaine, an associate editor with Fortune *magazine, presents six architects who are among the most successful in the United States—successful financially and artistically. They are influential shapers of the urban horizon.*



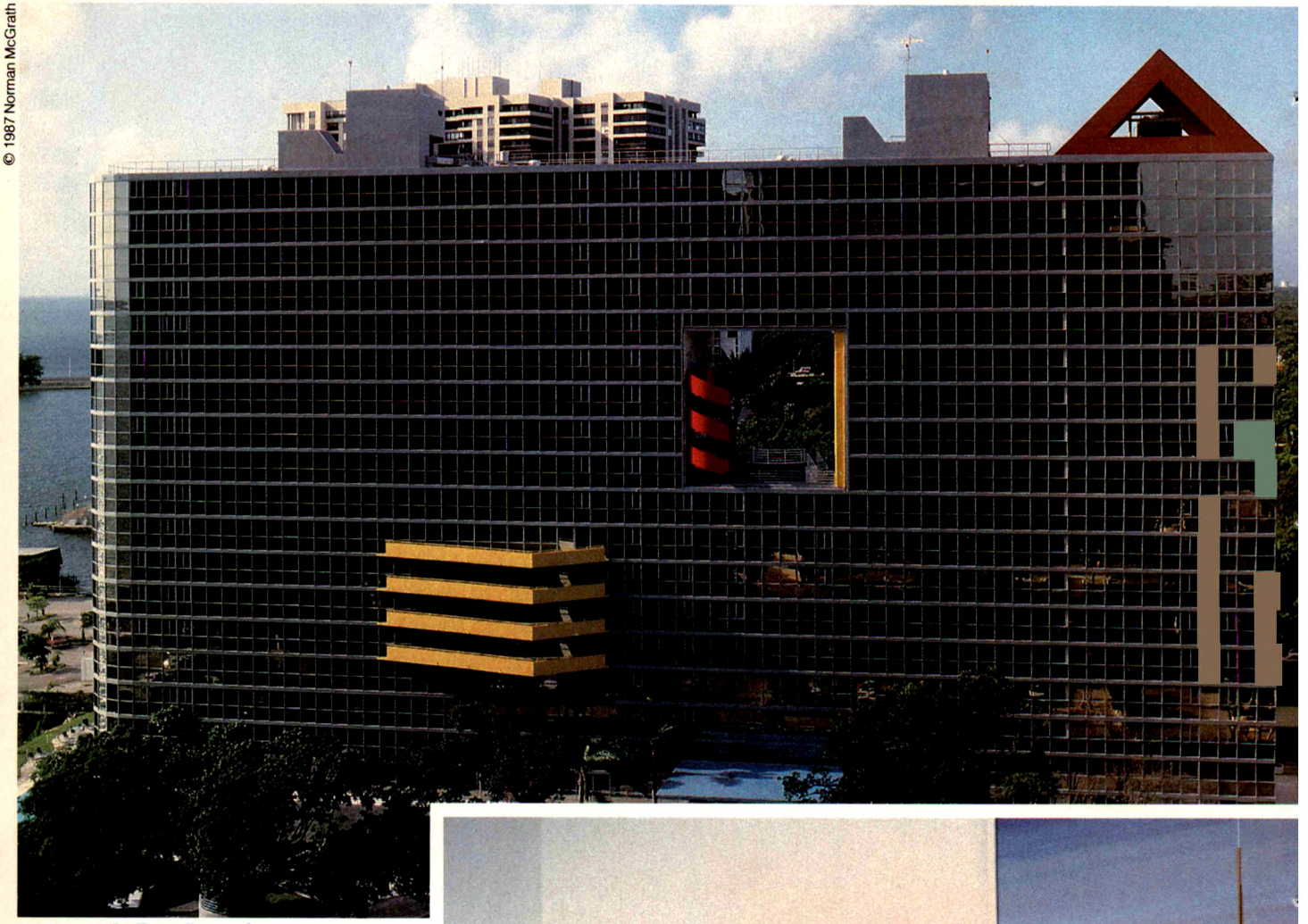
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BERNARDO FORT-BRESCIA AND LAURINDA SPEAR: The Iconoclasts

In his stark white conference room atop a Miami office building, Bernardo Fort-Brescia explains where he fits into the scheme of modern architecture. "If the traditional architects like Robert Stern—the ones who love history—are here," he says, giving the white table top a soft karate chop, "and the neomod-

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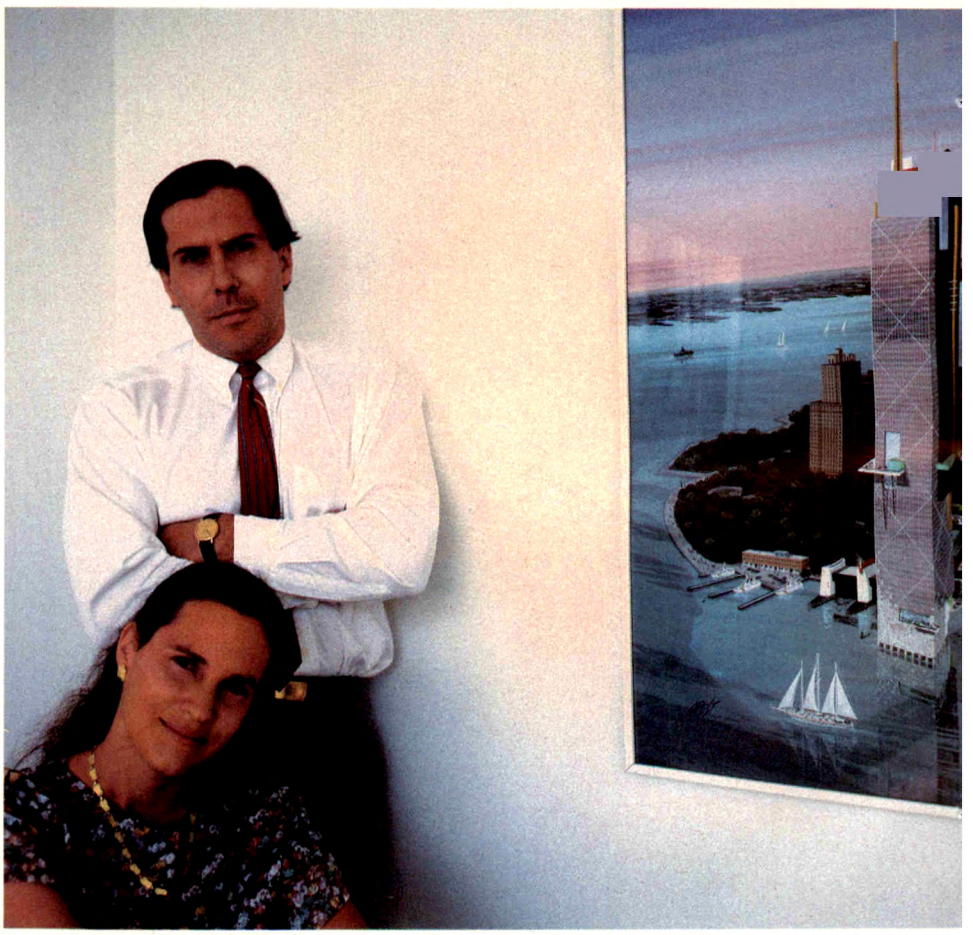
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Bernardo Fort-Brescia and Laurinda Spear took Miami by surprise with their Space Age apartment building, the Atlantis (above), with its whimsical touches including the open-air skycourt (previous page).

ernists like Helmut Jahn are here," he gives another chop a few centimeters to the left, "then I'm here," he adds, extending his arm as far as he can toward a floor-to-ceiling window about two meters away. Fort-Brescia and his wife, Laurinda Spear, both 35, run Arquitectonica—the word is Spanish for architectural—a young Miami firm whose futuristic designs startle the eye with their imaginative use of colors and architectural stunts. Some of Arquitectonica's high-rise condominiums, houses and office buildings dotting the Miami waterfront are said to have inspired the tropical colors and horizontal lines of the popular TV show "Miami Vice."

In 1980 Fort-Brescia and Spear



Portraits by Michael O'Neill

designed the Atlantis, a residential condominium that cost $14 million to construct. It jarred architectural sensibilities and brought the pair national recognition. It is a 20-story slab shaped like a submarine's conning tower, with a curved facade on one side whose windows provide a spectacular view of Biscayne Bay. To give it a surreal touch, Fort-Brescia and Spear placed a giant red triangular prism on the roof and punched out an 11-meter cube from the building's middle. This hole, known as the skycourt, sits 12 stories up and has become a pleasurable hangout for tenants, with its whirlpool, red spiral staircase and palm tree.

When most of his classmates from Harvard's graduate school of design headed for New York and Chicago in the mid-1970s, Fort-Brescia moved to Florida to teach at the University of Miami. There he worked with Laurinda Spear, who had just graduated from Columbia University's school of architecture and planning, to design her parents' waterfront house. This shocking-pink stucco structure, known as the Pink House, became one of the most widely photographed homes in America.

In 1979 Fort-Brescia got his big break in corporate architecture when at the age of 28 he won a commission to design a 42-story Miami condominium costing roughly $30 million for New York developer Harry Helmsley. Fort-Brescia had heard about the project from his family of prominent Peruvian businessmen and called Helmsley's New York office to solicit the job. When he was denied an interview on the grounds that Helmsley wanted an established architect, Fort-Brescia flew to New York and left a message at Helmsley's office to call and cancel if he couldn't meet him the following morning. The ruse worked. Helmsley called back to confirm, and when the two men met, Fort-Brescia made his pitch and got the job.

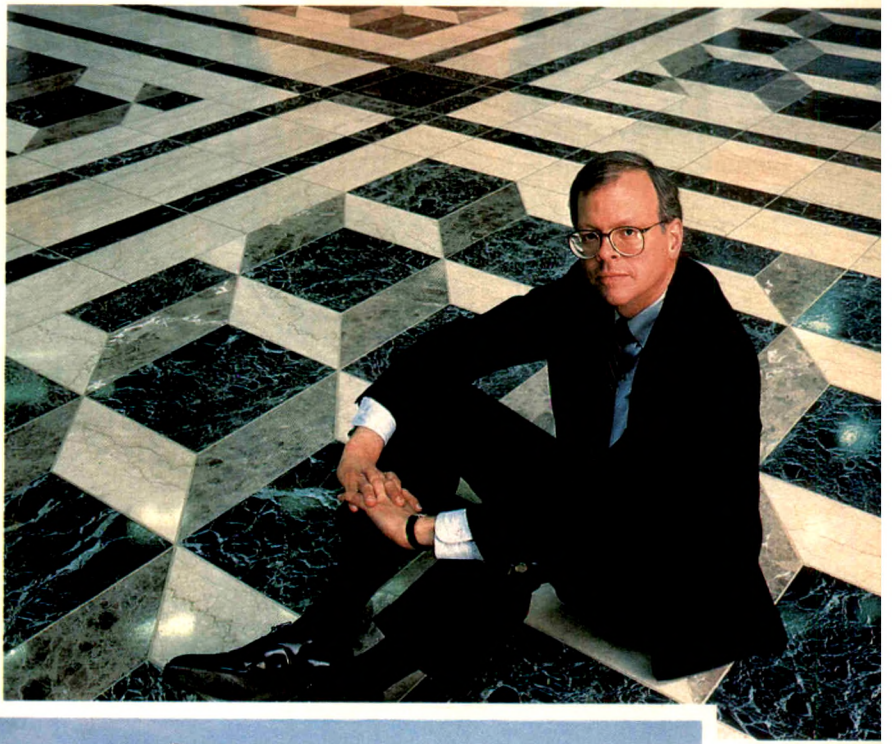
Today Fort-Brescia and Spear run the Miami office and branches in Chicago and New York, where they oversee 45 architects. Though both design, Fort-Brescia does most of the traveling and the selling, while Spear stays in Miami close to the drafting table and their three children. In the last stages of completion is a headquarters for Banco de Crédito del Peru, in Lima, which is sheathed in black marble and constructed around the remains of an Inca ruin. As Fort-Brescia explains: "I look at my work as an attitude, not a style. I'm always experimenting, looking at new ways of doing things and at better ways of doing things."

DAVID CHILDS: The Classicist

The IBM of architecture is Skidmore Owings & Merrill—huge, professional, profitable. When you hire David Childs, the chief designer in SOM's New York City office, you get not only his considerable design expertise but also a supermanager who oversees the firm's massive staff, which takes care of every drafting and engineering problem imaginable. Building a major high-rise is a vastly complicated manufacturing and logistical process. A typical skyscraper might contain 5000 windows, 7500 doorknobs and 100 kilometers of electrical wiring. At the peak of construction, as many as 10,000 people can be involved. The process requires the mind of a field marshal and the eye of an artist.

Childs, 46, came from a family of physicians and was on his way to being a surgeon when he realized that his true desire was to draw buildings, not blood. He enrolled in Yale's school of architecture and while there fell under the spell of architect Robert Venturi, who was

David Childs places classic designs in a modern context. He modeled the Washington, D.C., office building at 1300 New York Avenue (below) after an Italian Renaissance villa by using an arched entrance, columns and a stately curving facade.





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throwing stones at the glass boxes of modernism and telling young architects to look to history for new ideas. Says Childs: "Venturi opened our eyes to a whole past that not only had been forgotten, but had been prohibited to us."

With his newfound respect for tradition, Childs spent the 1970s and early '80s in Washington, D.C., designing structures for a city steeped in history. He made his name with his redesign of the three-kilometer Washington Mall, which houses the Capitol, monuments and museums. This project brought him commissions for Jefferson Court, a complex of offices and shops, and for a new headquarters for *U.S. News & World Report* magazine. He also designed the 1300 New York Avenue office building—a $51-million, 12-story structure—after a Renaissance palazzo. In the lobby a waterfall, inspired by the gardens of Villa Lante in Bagnaia, Italy, cascades from seven stories above into a marble pool surrounded by whimsical topiary spires and mock columns topped by huge marble balls.

"I'm a classicist," he admits unblushingly. "If you want to see the cutting edge of architecture, you should go to ancient Rome." Childs loves columns, arches and wedding-cake skyscrapers. To him the utmost architectural statement is to make a building "handsome." He adds, "The one thing an architect can do for a project is add art. And if we don't do that, we're clearly not necessary."

HELMUT JAHN: Flash and Fashion

His peers refer to him as Baron von High Tech or, less flatteringly, as the Flash Gordon of American architecture, but Helmut Jahn, 47, just laughs. And why not? By far the most flamboyant and commercially successful architect of his generation, Jahn is watching his imaginative high-rises shoot up in cities throughout the United States and Europe. "As an architect, you have to be an optimist, always trying to relate an exuberance and excitement in your buildings that will make our cities better places to live," he says. In New York alone he has five major buildings under construction whose floor space exceeds that of the Empire State Building. Add to that the tallest building in continental Europe—the 59-story Messe Tower in Frankfurt—and you get the most prolific architect in America.

Jahn melds a Space Age look with traditional skyscraper lines, exploiting their contrasts so few could miss them. A typical Jahn touch: folding glass and stone curtain walls into octagons, rotundas, diamonds and spirals. "We give developers an image that sets their buildings apart," Jahn says.

And he knows how to give clients what they want. Whereas many architects will present the paying customer with a single drawing of a new building, Jahn prepares four or five sketches to give clients a choice. He has recently completed the Park Avenue Tower in midtown Manhattan, where IBM leases office space for training. Says Jahn: "IBM has a very solid business image. But they didn't want to be thought of as stodgy and old-fashioned. They picked the building because they liked its forward-looking, optimistic design." When the building, including the pyramid at its top, is lighted at dusk,



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Most of Helmut Jahn's designs are sleek and soaring skyscrapers that belie their mass. His Park Avenue Tower (left) in midtown Manhattan consciously repeats the sturdy pedestal, tapered lines and crowning pyramid of an Egyptian obelisk.



it has a futuristic glow, but Park Avenue Tower's overall obelisk shape makes a sweeping bow to the past.

Born in Germany, the son of a Bavarian schoolmaster, Jahn came to the United States in 1966 to study at the Illinois Institute of Technology, where Ludwig Mies van der Rohe made the sleek glass high-rise famous. A year later Jahn joined Chicago's C.F. Murphy Associates, a firm of commercial architects. He prospered almost immediately on the strength of his prolific new design ideas and lightning-fast ability to sketch them. At the age of 33, he became executive vice-president and director of planning and design. Six years ago the firm changed its name to Murphy/Jahn. Today located in a 1920s office building, it employs 80 architects.

Not surprisingly, this master builder wouldn't mind being the first architect to create a mega-skyscraper, a building that soars 200 or 300 stories. He has already included such a structure in his design for Donald Trump's proposed Television City in New York, a gigantic seven-tower project, with one tower that would loom 150 stories above the Hudson River. But Trump switched architects after the community objected to having such a mega-project in an already overcrowded residential neighborhood. Says Jahn: "I think there will be a 200-story skyscraper someday. However, it will require a developer who will not think in conventional terms and for whom economic restraints won't apply."

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Ralph Johnson is one of the heirs to the tradition of innovative architecture in his hometown of Chicago. His office building at 123 North Wacker Drive (left) recalls nearby landmark buildings, but with a three-story penthouse and an overall flair that are strictly futuristic.

RALPH JOHNSON: The Regionalist

At an age when most young architects in big firms spend their days tediously drafting window details for a skyscraper, Ralph Johnson, 38, already has a major Chicago high-rise to his name and four more towers under way. Johnson leapfrogged the slow process of apprenticeship at Chicago's prestigious Perkins & Will in 1984 when Rubloff Inc., a commercial developer looking to build a skyscraper, took a fancy to his design over those of all his colleagues at the firm.

Johnson believes strongly in regionalism, which means designing a structure to reflect the style of those surrounding it. He gave that first building, the $36-million, 30-story tower at 123 North Wacker Drive, a pyramid top to reflect the slope of the roof of the 57-year-old Civic Opera House located just across the street. Then he endowed the facade with a split personality. Its glass and aluminum curtain wall echoes the gigantic modernism of Chicago's Sears Tower, the world's tallest building, but the wall is edged with gray and red granite to mimic the city's solid turn-of-the-century stone skyscrapers.

"I don't like to label my buildings modern or postmodern," says Johnson. "I consciously try to recall the old buildings of Chicago without being too literal. My work is a collage of the modern and the old." The summit of 123 North Wacker has a three-story atrium, which Johnson describes as a "corporate penthouse in the sky." The pyramid is lit at night, and just below it, spotlights shine through decorative portholes in the building's skin, making 123 North Wacker a beacon in the Windy City.

Besides being a creator of beautiful collages, Johnson is a technical wizard constantly searching for ways to make a building more efficient and thus more salable. At 123 North Wacker, for example, he equipped each floor

with its own heating and cooling unit rather than installing the customary central system, which requires expensive duct work. The design allows tenants to control their own heat and air conditioning, resulting in lower energy costs and permitting them more flexibility in using the space. A floor that houses heat-generating computer equipment, for example, can receive more air conditioning, while other floors get less.

Johnson became fascinated with architecture when he was growing up in Chicago and riding his bicycle past a Frank Lloyd Wright house just down the street. At the Harvard Graduate School of Design he learned that buildings should be responsive to the people who work in them. Today Johnson argues that employees are more productive in buildings with big atrium spaces that bring in natural light, and open plazas where workers can relax, dine or shop at lunchtime. "The purpose of architecture," he says, "is to create better environments and make people happier. That's why you become an architect in the first place—to do something people enjoy."

WILLIAM PEDERSEN: The Postmodernist

When he was a boy in St. Paul, Minnesota, William Pedersen saved up to buy a pair of special blades to attach to his old hockey skates. He didn't want to skate faster; he just loved their sleek, curved line. The shape of those skate blades has been celebrated in a number of his projects, including 333 Wacker Drive in Chicago, which he designed in association with another firm. Finished in 1983, this 36-story office was Pedersen's first high-rise and the beginning of a national reputation for his firm, Kohn Pedersen Fox.

Paul Goldberger, the architecture critic of *The New York Times*, says of the firm's work: "Kohn Pedersen has managed to do what few architectural firms have—to make a lot of money and to produce first-rate architecture." A poll among architects last year by *Progressive Architecture* magazine listed two of KPF's commissions among the five most significant buildings designed in the past five years.

Now Pedersen, 49, is shying away from modernistic designs like 333 Wacker and is blending contemporary and classical elements in his work, a style most often called postmodernism. Says he: "What classicism teaches us is to be concerned with scale, the relationship of a human being to the building and the parts of the building to each other." His Procter & Gamble headquarters in Cincinnati seems to sum up KPF's current thinking best. It is a six-story, L-shaped structure with twin 17-story octagonal towers rising on either side of the corner of the L. Its limestone facade and pyramid roofs on the towers enable the building to fit seamlessly with P&G's old headquarters next door. A two-hectare park with walkways and benches gives employees a pleasant lunchtime retreat.

Today's chief executives, says Pedersen, are becoming less concerned with building corporate monuments and more interested in architecture that adds to the quality of life. Procter & Gamble understood this when building its Cincinnati headquarters. Says Pedersen: "The chief executive wanted to give something back to the community. With Procter & Gamble we could have easily built the tallest building in town. Instead we designed a relatively small building with a large park, which provides a great amenity to the city."

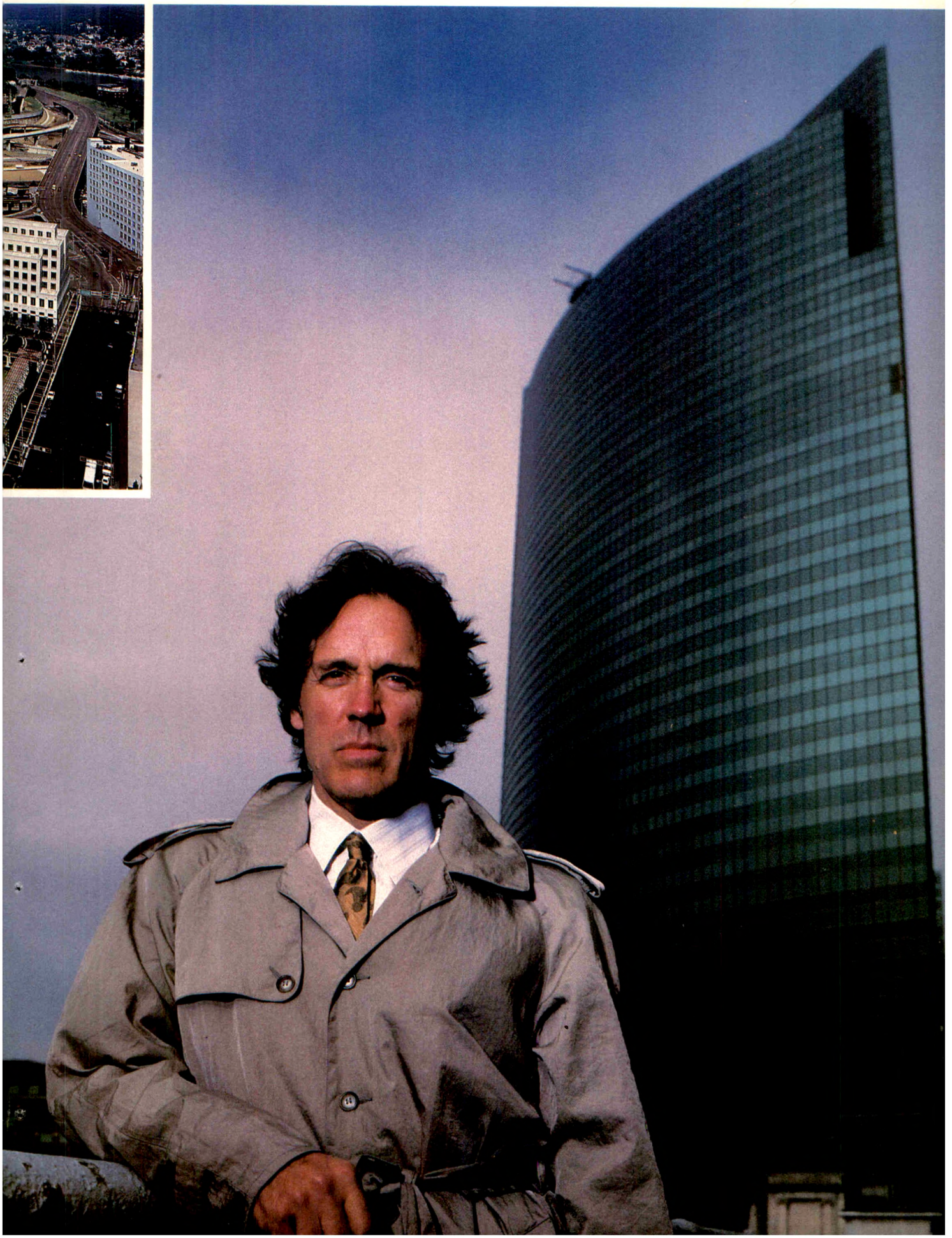
Pedersen graduated from MIT in 1963 and worked for a number of architects, including I.M. Pei, renowned for his elegantly modern skyscrapers. In 1976 he decided to start his own shop, but the New York building industry was so dead that he nearly gave it all up to return to those St. Paul winters. Thanks to his partner Eugene Kohn, the legendary salesman who landed a commission from ABC-TV to design an office building and a studio on Manhattan's Upper West Side, Pedersen got his big break, and the firm was in business. Since then KPF, driven by Pedersen's designs and Kohn's silver-tongued salesmanship, has grown to 150 architects in New York City and has designed over 20 major buildings in the United States, England and West Germany.

When he's not designing beautiful buildings, Pedersen plays classical piano, a hobby that he says is closely related to architecture: "Designing a building is like interpreting a piece of music. You have to think about how each detail of a building, like each musical phrase, is begun, how it is ended, and the way it's sculpted." ♦

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William Pedersen, shown in front of a modernistic Chicago skyscraper he designed, has since shied away from creating architectural monuments in favor of buildings on a human scale. His elegantly symmetrical headquarters for Proctor & Gamble in Cincinnati (above) includes a large park for the entire community. The structure reflects Pedersen's dual interest in "the relationship of a human being to the building and the parts of the building to each other."



NIETZSCHE IN AMERICA

By Allan Bloom

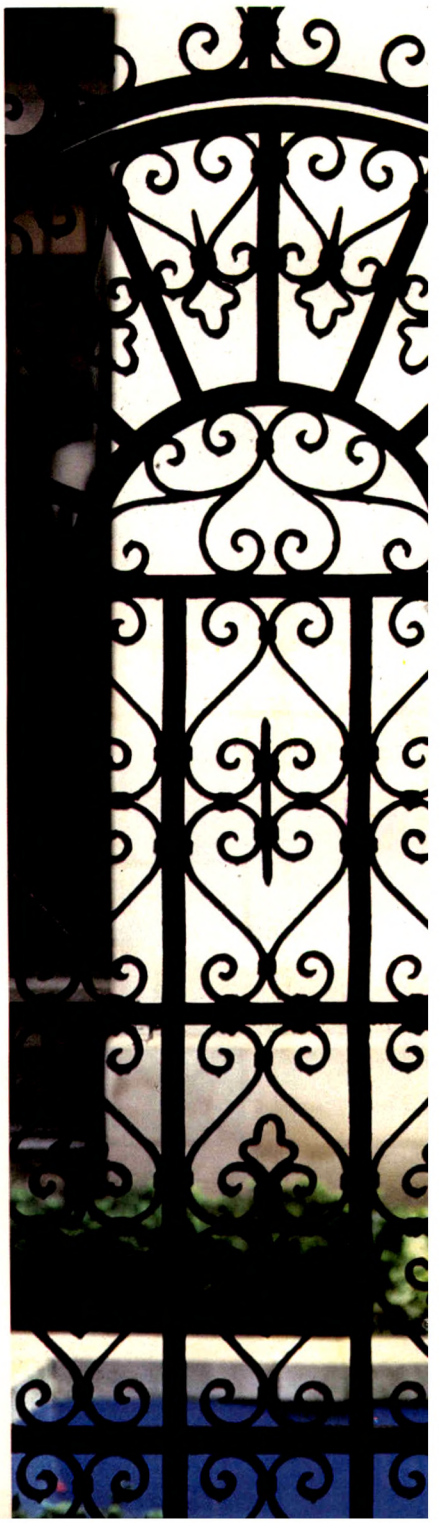
The German philosopher would be surprised at the optimistic baggage his ideas have acquired in 20th-century democracies.

Allan Bloom, a political philosopher who teaches at the University of Chicago, recently published a book that has become a surprise success, rising to the top of The New York Times*'s nonfiction best-seller list and generating heated debate in the media and in academe. Despite the title,* The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students, *this controversial book is not simply an account of problems in U.S. universities. In the words of London's* Times Literary Supplement, *Bloom's jeremiad "is nothing less than an attempt to chart the crisis in Western civilization. In particular it focuses on the way in which 19th-century German philosophy has taken possession of American culture....yet as an analysis of the character of modernity, it is relevant to the European experience." Similarly, French sociologist Raymond Boudon says Bloom's "pessimistic diagnosis applies to Western Europe and especially to France."*

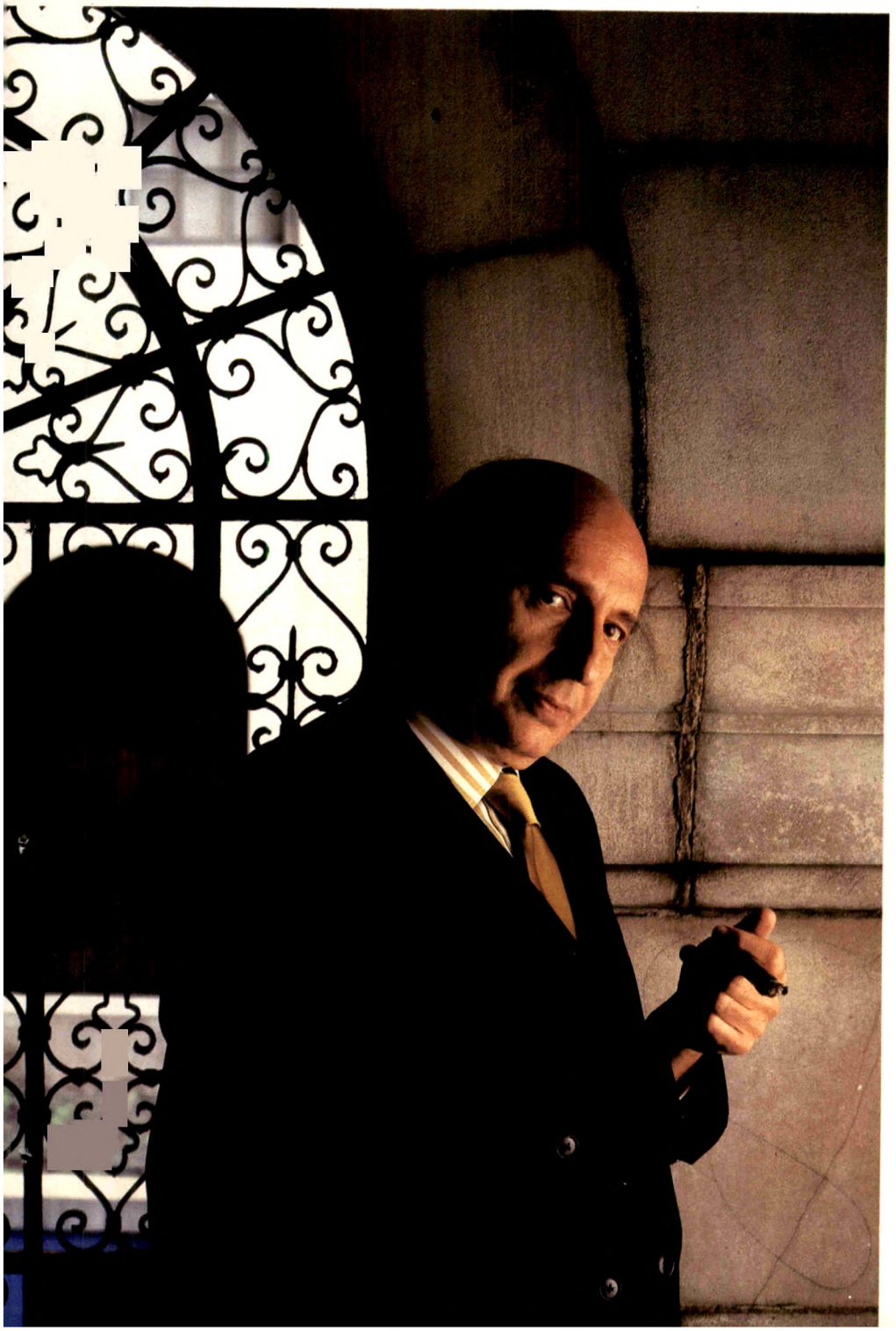
In the excerpt on these pages, Bloom examines the influence of Friedrich Nietzsche on American culture. An admirer of Nietzsche's thought, Bloom argues that many of this philosopher's ideas, funneled through disciples like Sigmund Freud and Max Weber, have been embraced by American academics but only half-digested. The result is "nihilism without the abyss" and a pervasive "value relativism" that Bloom considers the plague of contemporary university life.

Although conservatives find much to agree with in the book, particularly Bloom's account of how the New Left radicals of the 1960s used the language of value relativism to call into question the traditional quest for universal truth in the university, it is a misleading oversimplification to say that liberals are attacking his arguments and conservatives praising them. Bloom's penchant for provocative insights has generated an extraordinary range of responses among intellectuals on both ends of the political spectrum, four of which are presented on these pages.

Bloom is a professor of philosophy and political science at the University of Chicago, where he was educated. Previously he taught at the University of Toronto and at Cornell University during a turbulent period in the 1960s and '70s when campus radicals disrupted academic life. Before the remarkable success of his latest book, Bloom was a relatively obscure academic, best known as a translator of Plato and Rousseau and as a charismatic teacher.



Allan Bloom. Photograph by Kevin Horan.



The most astonishing phenomenon of our time, all the more astonishing in being almost unnoticed, is that there is now an entirely new language of good and evil, originating in an attempt to get "beyond good and evil." Even those who deplore our current moral condition do so in the very language that exemplifies that condition. The new language of *value* relativism constitutes a change in our view of things as great as the one that took place when Christianity replaced Greek and Roman paganism.

A new language always reflects a new point of view. The gradual, unconscious popularization of new words, or of old words used in new ways, is a sure sign of a profound change in peoples' articulation of the world. When Anglican bishops, a generation after the publication of Hobbes's *Leviathan* in 1651, spoke of the "state of nature," "contracts" and "rights," it was clear that Hobbes's words had conquered the ecclesiastical authorities. They were no longer able to understand themselves as they once had. It was thenceforward inevitable that the modern archbishops of Canterbury would have no more in common with the ancient ones than does the second Queen Elizabeth with the first.

When contemporary political leaders speak in the rhetorical arena of international affairs, the opposition between "good" and "evil" is not negotiable and is a cause of war. Those who are interested in "conflict resolution" find it much easier to reduce the tension between "val-

© 1987 by Allan Bloom. Reprinted by permission of Simon & Schuster, Inc.

ues" than the tension between good and evil.

In this context the term *value*, meaning the subjectivity of all belief about good and evil, serves the simple quest for self-preservation. And this longing to shuck off constraints and have one peaceful, happy world is the first of the odd affinities between present-day America and turn-of-the-century German philosophy in its most advanced form.

But there is a second side to the coin. People deeply committed to "values" are admired. Their intense belief, their caring or concern, their believing in *something*, is the proof of autonomy, freedom and creativity. Such persons are the contrary of easy-going, and they have standards, all the more worthy because they are not received from tradition, and are not based on a reality all can see. Nor are they derived from thin rationalizing confined to calculation about material interests. The heroic and artistic types, antibourgeois to the core, dedicate themselves to ideals of their own making.

Thus our use of the new "value" language leads us in two opposite directions—to follow the line of least resistance, or to adopt strong poses and fanatic resolutions.

But these are merely different deductions from a common premise. Values are not the product of reason, and it is fruitless to seek them in order to find the truth or the good life. The quest begun by Odysseus and continued over three millennia has come to an end with the observation that there is nothing to seek. This alleged fact was announced by Friedrich Nietzsche just over a century ago when he said, "God is dead."

Good and evil then for the first time appeared as "values," of which there have been a thousand and one, none rationally or objectively preferable to any other. The salutary religion-based illusion about the existence of good and evil had been definitively dispelled. For Nietzsche this was an unparalleled catastrophe; it meant the decomposition of culture and the loss of human aspiration. The Socratic "examined" life was no longer possible or desirable. The philosophical way of life had become simply poisonous. In short, Nietzsche with the utmost gravity told modern man that he was free-falling in the abyss of nihilism. Perhaps after having lived through this terrible experience, people might hope for a fresh era of value creation, the emergence of new gods. Or so Nietzsche thought.

Modern democracy was, of course, the target of Nietzsche's criticism. As he saw it, rationalism and its egalitarianism were the contrary of creativity; daily life was for him the civilized *reanimalization* of man; nobody really believed in anything anymore, and everyone spent his life in frenzied work and frenzied play so as not to face the fact, not to look into the abyss.

Nietzsche's call to revolt against liberal democracy was ultimately more powerful than Marx's. And Nietzsche added that the Left, socialism, was not the opposite of the special kind of Right that was capitalism, but rather its fulfillment. The Left meant equality, the true Right inequality. Nietzsche's call was from the Right, but a new Right transcending both capitalism and socialism.

But in spite of this, the latest champions of modern democratic or egalitarian man find much that is attractive in Nietzsche's understanding of things. It is the sign of the strength of the notion of equality and of the failure of Nietzsche's war against it that he is now more influential on the Left than on the Right.

This may at first appear surprising. Nietzsche, after all, looks toward the extraordinary, not the ordinary, the unequal, not the equal. But the democratic man requires flattery, like any other ruler, and the earliest versions of democratic theory did not provide it. Political thinkers and politicians, notably Alexis de Tocqueville, justified democracy as the regime in which very ordinary people were protected in their attempt to achieve very ordinary and common goals. It was also the regime dominated by public opinion, where the common denominator set the rule for everyone. Democracy presented itself as decent mediocrity superior to the splendid corruption of older regimes.

Bloom's argument, as he admits, depends on the belief that, "the intellect has an effect on history." No doubt it does. The question is, What affects the intellect? This is the question that informs virtually all of modern thought—from Hobbes and Locke... to Rousseau, to Marx, to Freud, to the contemporary academic who explains why people think what they think by genetics or by climatology or by the web of "power relations." Bloom parts company with all these thinkers not because he disagrees with their answers, but because he does not recognize the legitimacy of the question.

Louis Menand, The New Republic

But it is quite another thing to have a regime—the one Americans now have—in which all the citizens can be thought to be at least potentially autonomous, creating values for themselves. A value-creating man is a plausible substitute for a good man, and some such substitute becomes practically inevitable in a society dominated by pop relativism. Very few people, finally, can think of themselves as either evil or nothing. The respectable and accessible nobility of man is to be found not in the quest for or discovery of the good life but in creating one's own "lifestyle," of which there is not just one but many possible, none comparable to another.

All this has become everyday fare in the United States. The most popular schools of psychology and their therapies take value positing as the standard of healthy personality. Woody Allen's film comedy is nothing but a set of variations on the theme of the man who does not have a real "self" or "identity," and feels superior to inauthentically self-satisfied people because he is conscious of his situation and at the same time inferior to them because they are "adjusted." This borrowed psychology turns into a textbook in Woody Allen's 1983 film, *Zelig* [see *Review*, 4/1984], which is the story of an "other-directed" man, as opposed to an "inner-directed" man, terms popularized during the 1950s by David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd*. Riesman had borrowed these terms from his analyst, Erich Fromm, who himself absorbed them from a really serious thinker, Nietzsche's heir, Martin Heidegger.

I was astounded to see how doctrinaire Woody Allen is, and how normal his way of looking at things—which has immediate roots in the most profound German philosophy—has become in the American entertainment market. One of the links between Germany and the United States, psychologist Bruno Bettelheim, actually plays a cameo role in *Zelig*.

Zelig is a man who literally becomes whoever or whatever is expected of him—a Republican when with the rich; a gangster when with Mafiosi; black, Chinese or female when with blacks, Chinese or females. He is nothing in himself, just a collection of roles prescribed by others. He inevitably enters into psychiatric treatment, where we learn that he was once "tradition-directed," i.e. from a family of silly, dancing, rabbinical Jews.

Tradition-directed means to be guided by old values, usually religious, which give a man a role that he takes to be more than a role; they give him a reality and a place in the world. It goes without saying that, in Allen's view, a return to that old mode of adjustment and apparent health is neither possible nor desirable. One is supposed to laugh at the dancing Jew, although it is not clear whether from the point of view of alienation or health. Zelig's own health is restored when he becomes "inner-directed," when he follows his real instincts and sets his own values.

Woody Allen's haunted comedy diagnoses our ills as stemming from value relativism, for which the cure is value positing. And his great strength is in depicting the self-conscious role-player, never quite at home in his role, interesting because he is trying so hard to be like the others, who are ridiculous because they are unaware of their emptiness. But Allen is tasteless and superficial in playing with his Jewishness, which apparently has no inner dignity for him. And where he fails completely is in his presentation of the healthy inner-directed man, who is neither funny nor interesting.

If Allen's art is ultimately shallow and disappointing, it is because it tries to assure us that the agonies of nihilism are just neuroses that can be cured by a little therapy and a little stiffening of our backs. Erich Fromm's *Escape from Freedom* (1941) is Dale Carnegie's popular self-help prescriptions with a bit of middle-European cultural whipped cream on top. Get rid of capitalist alienation and Puritan repression, and all will be well as each man chooses for himself.

In politics, in entertainment, in religion, everywhere, Americans find the language connected with Nietzsche's value revolution, a language necessitated by a new perspective on the things of most concern to them. Words such as *charisma*, *lifestyle*, *commitment*, *identity* and many others, all of which can easily be traced to Nietzsche, are now practically American slang, although they, and the things to which they refer, would have been incomprehensible to our fathers, not to speak of the Founding Fathers.

A few years ago I chatted with a taxi driver who had just gotten out of prison, where he served time for peddling dope. Happily he had undergone "therapy." What kind? He responded, "All kinds—depth-psychology, transactional analysis, but what I liked best was gestalt." Some of the German ideas did not even require English words to become the language of the American people.

What an extraordinary thing it is that high-class talk from what was the peak of Western European intellectual life, in pre-Hitler Germany, has become as natural as chewing gum on American streets. It indeed had its effect on this taxi driver. (A generation earlier he would have found God and learned to despise himself as a sinner.) The problem lay with his sense of *self*, not with any original sin or devils in him. We have here the American way of digesting continental despair. It is nihilism with a happy ending.

This popularization of German philosophy in the United States is of peculiar interest to me because I have watched it occur during my own intellectual lifetime, and I feel a little like someone who knew Napoleon when he was six. I have seen value relativism and its concomitants grow greater in the land than anyone could have imagined. Who in 1920 would have believed that Max Weber's technical sociological terminology would someday be the everyday language of the United States, itself in the meantime become the most powerful nation in

the world? The self-understanding of hippies, yippies, yuppies, prelates and Presidents has unconsciously been formed by German thought of a half-century earlier; the late Freudian-Marxist philosopher Herbert Marcuse's accent has been turned into a midwestern twang; the *echt Deutsch* label has been replaced by a "Made in America" label; and the new American lifestyle has become a Disneyland version of the Weimar Republic for the whole family.

So my studies have led me ineluctably back to the half-hidden and thrilling origins of all this, providing me a standpoint from which I look in both directions, forward to evolving American life and backward to the profound philosophical tradition, with the most ambiguous intellectual, moral and political consequences. Knowledge of this fascinating intellectual history is required in order to understand ourselves. It will also allow us to consider real alternatives—if only intellectual historians could be persuaded that the intellect has an effect on history, that, as Nietzsche said, "the greatest deeds are thoughts," that "the world revolves around the inventors of new values, revolves silently." Nietzsche was such an inventor, and we are still revolving around him, although rather squeakily.

I got my first look at this scene at the midpoint of its development, when American university life was being revolutionized by German thought, which was still the preserve of earnest intellectuals. When I came to the University of Chicago in the mid-1940s, just after the war, terms like *value judgment* were fresh, confined to an elite and promising special insight. There were great expectations in the social sciences that a new era was beginning in which man and society would be understood better than they had ever been understood before. The academic character of the philosophy departments, with their tired and tiresome methodology and positivism, had caused people interested in the perennial questions about man to migrate to the social sciences.

There were two writers who generated real enthusiasm—Sigmund Freud and Max Weber. (Karl Marx was revered but, as had been true for a long time, was little read and did not provide inspiration for dealing with the problems really facing us.) Although it is even now still insufficiently appreciated, Freud and Weber were both thinkers who were profoundly influenced by Nietzsche, as is obvious to anyone who knows Nietzsche and knows what was going on in the German-speaking world at the turn of the century. In a strange way, during the first three decades of the 20th century, they divided up Nietzsche's psychological and social concerns between them. Freud concentrated on the id, or unconscious, the sexual as the motor of the most interesting spiritual phenomena, and the related ideas of sublimation and neurosis. Weber was most concerned with the problem of values, the role of religion in their formation, and community. Together Freud and Weber are the immediate source of most of the language with which we are now so familiar.

Everyone knew that they were German thinkers, and that the professors teaching them at Chicago, Columbia and other universities were a mix of German refugees from Hitler (notably those allied with the Frankfurt-based Institute for Social Research during the 1920s) and Americans who had either studied in Germany prior to Hitler or who had learned from these émigrés. It was not a problem to any of them that these ideas were German. Freud and Weber were part of that great pre-Hitlerian classical tradition, which everyone respected. Nietzsche himself was not at that time very respectable because his thought seemed to have some discomfiting relation to fascism, and many of those who had favored Nietzsche in the Anglo-Saxon world (where he had had his greatest direct influence on artists) had not been sufficiently alert to the dangers of fascism and anti-Semitism (although Nietzsche himself was the very opposite of an anti-Semite). The fact that German thought had taken an antirational

It is a virtue of The Closing of the American Mind *that it will provoke nearly everyone.... Bloom, a philosopher, deliberately distances himself from all parties, so as to ask the kind of questions Socrates put to his fellow Athenians: "What do your words really mean? How do you know what you know?"...Few books in recent years come close to Bloom's grand tour of the American mind either in the ambition of their reach or the breadth of their grasp. A scalpel-bearing and elegant curmudgeon, Bloom interprets our crisis in terms of the entire evolution of modern thought in the West.*

S. Frederick Starr, The Washington Post Book World

and antiliberal turn with Nietzsche, and even more so with Heidegger, was evident. But this was simply repressed, and a blind eye was turned to their influence on their contemporaries.

My professors, many of whom were to become very famous, did not tend to be philosophical. They did not dig back into the sources of the new language and categories they were using. They thought that these were scientific discoveries like any others, which were to be used in order to make further discoveries. They were very much addicted to abstractions and generalizations as Tocqueville predicted they would be. They believed in scientific progress and appeared (there may have been an element of boasting and self-irony in this) to be convinced that they were on the verge of a historic breakthrough in the social sciences.

These teachers were inebriated by the unconscious and by "values." And they were also sure that scientific progress would spur social and political progress. All were either Marxists or New Deal liberals. By the late 1940s, as they saw it, the war against the Right had been won domestically at the polls, and abroad on the battlefield. The question of principle had been resolved. Equality and the welfare state were now a part of the order of things, and what remained was to complete the democratic project. Psychotherapy would make individuals happy, while sociology would improve societies.

I do not believe any of these professors noticed the darker side of Freud and Weber, let alone Nietzsche-Heidegger extremism lying somewhere beneath the surface. Or rather, if they did notice, they found it of autobiographical rather than scientific interest. It is amazing to me that the irrational source of all conscious life in Freud, and the relativity of all values in Weber, did not pose a problem for them and their optimism about science.

Freud was very dubious about the future of civilization and the role of reason in the life of man. He certainly was not a convinced advocate of democracy or equality. And Weber, much more thoughtful than Freud about science, morals and politics, lived in an atmosphere of permanent tragedy. His science of society was formulated as a doubtful dare against the chaos of things, and values certainly lay beyond its limits.

This is what the very precarious, not to say imaginary, distinction between facts and values meant. Reason in politics leads to the inhumanity of bureaucracy. Weber found it impossible to prefer rational politics to the politics of irrational commitment; he believed that reason and science themselves were value commitments like any other commitments, incapable of asserting their own goodness, thus having lost what had always been most distinctive in them.

Weber, along with many others in Germany under Nietzsche's influence, saw that all that Western democrats cared for was threatened by his insight and that we were without intellectual or moral resources to govern the outcome. Weber realized that we require values, which in turn require a peculiar human creativity that is drying up and in any event has no cosmic support; scientific analysis itself concludes that reason is powerless, while dissolving the protective horizon within which men can put a value.

None of this was peculiar to Weber or comes simply from his distressed personality, which he had at least partly because of the bleak perspective that lay before him. There is no doubt that "value relativism," if it is believed in, takes one into very dark regions of the soul and very dangerous political experiments.

But on enchanted American ground the tragic sense has little place. The early proponents of the new social science, such as sociologist Talcott Parsons, gaily accepted the value insight, sure that their own values were just fine.

It was not until the 1960s that the value insight began to have its true effects in the United States, as it had had in Germany 30 or 40 years earlier. Suddenly a new generation that had

Bloom likes to call his opponents relativists without himself producing any absolute. He has no firm basis in religion or tradition....Bloom is an idealist for whom all crises are crises of philosophy. After nearly 400 pages and a good deal of bluster, his positive solutions to the general problems of our society and the particular problems of our education remain what they were at the beginning of his volume: Great Books courses (about which he is actually half-hearted) and a more moral vocabulary. It is not enough.

Robert Gorman Davis, The New Leader

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not lived off inherited tradition, that had been educated in philosophical and scientific indifference to good and evil, came on the scene representing value commitment and taught their elders a most unpleasant lesson.

The image of this astonishing Americanization of the German pathos can be seen in the smiling face of Louis Armstrong as he belts out the words of his great hit "Mack the Knife." As most American intellectuals know, it is a translation of the song "Mackie Messer" from *The Threepenny Opera* (1928), a monument of Weimar Republic popular culture, written by two heroes of the artistic Left, playwright Bertolt Brecht and composer Kurt Weill. There was a strange nostalgia among many of the American intelligentsia for this moment just prior to Hitler's coming to power, and Lotte Lenya's rendition of this song has long stood with Marlene Dietrich's singing in *The Blue Angel* as the symbol of a charming, neurotic, sexy, decadent longing for some hazy fulfillment not quite present to the consciousness. Less known to American intelligentsia is a story in Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (a book well known to Brecht) entitled "On the Pale Criminal," which tells of a neurotic murderer eerily resembling Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment*. The pale criminal does not know, cannot know, that he committed a murder out of a motive as legitimate as any other and useful in many important situations, but delegitimized in our pacific times: he lusted after "the joy of the knife."

This scenario for "Mack the Knife" is the beginning of the supramoral attitude of expectancy, waiting to see what the volcano of the id will spew forth, which appealed to Weimar sophisticates and their American admirers. Everything is all right as long as it is not fascism! With Armstrong taking Lenya's place, it is all mass-marketed and the message becomes less dangerous, although no less corrupt. All awareness of foreignness disappears. It is thought to be folk culture, all-American, part of the American century, just as "stay loose" (as opposed to uptight) is supposed to have been an insight of rock music and not a translation of Heidegger's *gelassenheit*. The historical sense and the distance on our times, the only advantages of Weimar nostalgia, are gone, and American self-satisfaction—the sense that the scene is ours, that we have nothing important to learn about life from the past—is served.

This image can be seen in American intellectual history, if only one substitutes Mary McCarthy for Louis Armstrong and Erich Fromm for Lenya, and so on through the honor roll of American intellectuals. American stars are singing a song they do not understand, translated from a German original. They are having a huge popular success with unknown but wide-ranging consequences, as something of the original message touches something in American souls. But behind it all, the master lyricists are Nietzsche and Heidegger.

My insistence on the Germanness of all this is intended not as a know-nothing response to foreign influence, the search for a German intellectual under every bed, but to heighten awareness of where we must look if we are to understand what we are saying and thinking, for we are in danger of forgetting.

The great influence of a nation with a powerful intellectual life over less well-endowed nations, even if the armies of the latter are very powerful, is not rare in human experience. The most obvious cases are the influence of Greece on Rome and of France on Germany and Russia.

But it is precisely the differences between these two cases and the example of Germany and the United States that make the latter so problematic. Greek and French philosophy were universalistic in intention and fact. They appealed to the use of a faculty potentially possessed by all men everywhere and at all times. The adjective in *Greek* philosophy is only an inessential tag, as it is in *French* Enlightenment. (The same is true of *Italian* Renaissance, a rebirth that is proof of the accidental character of nations and of the universality of Greek thinkers.) The good life and the just regime they taught knew no limits of race, nation or religion.

Bloom has written a "how to" book for the few—not so very few, according to the best-seller list—who want to know how to be independent. It is about the arduous task of achieving autonomy, understood not as capricious "commitments," but as governance of oneself in accordance with prescriptive nature. It is living in accordance with philosophy (truth) rather than in subservience to convention, myth, opinion....The book's success is evidence against Bloom's severe judgment about the decay of the capacity for reflection about life's large questions....Bloom's best seller is a timely sign of the high level at which many Americans can be addressed.

George F. Will, The Washington Post

This relation to man as man was the very definition of philosophy. We are aware of this when we speak of science, and no one seriously talks of German, Italian or English physics. And when Americans speak seriously about politics, they mean that their principles of freedom and equality are rational and everywhere applicable. World War II was really an educational project aimed at those who did not accept these principles.

But German philosophy after Hegel cast doubt on the universality of such principles, and there was some relationship between German politics and German thought. That school of 19th-century thought called historicism has taught that the mind is essentially related to history or culture. Germanness is, according to later German philosophers, an essential part of their work. For Nietzsche and those influenced by him, values are the products of folk minds and have relevance only to those minds. The possibility of translation itself is doubted by Heidegger. For him the Latin translations of the Greek philosophical terms are superficial and do not convey the essence of the translated text.

German thought tended not toward liberation from one's own culture, as we had earlier thought, but toward reconstituting the rootedness in one's own. Thus Americans are like the millionaire in René Clair's film *The Ghost (Geist) Goes West* who brings a castle from brooding Scotland to sunny Florida and adds canals and gondolas for "local color." We chose a system of thought that, like some wines, does not travel; we chose a way of looking at things that could never be ours and had as its starting point dislike of us and our goals. The United States was held to be a nonculture, a collection of castoffs from real cultures, seeking only comfortable self-preservation in a regime dedicated to superficial cosmopolitanism in thought and deed.

Our desire for the German things was proof we could not understand them. Whether "value relativism" is harmonious with democracy is a question that is dealt with by never being raised. Social scientists deny that thought, especially serious thought, could have had anything to do with Hitler's success in 1933. But the pre-Hitler Weimar Republic also contained intelligent persons who were attracted, at least in the beginning, to fascism, for reasons very like those motivating the Left's ideologues—that is, by reflections on autonomy and "value creation." Once one plunges into the abyss, there is no assurance whatsoever that equality, democracy or socialism will be found on the other side.

Why, then, could *ideas* contrary to American *ideals* so easily take root? Pierre Hassner, a French political scientist, once asked whether the fantastic success of Freud in America was due simply to the fact that so many of his disciples took refuge from Hitler there and were very effective propagandists, or whether there was some special need for Freud in a country he did not much care for.

As a Chicago boy, I was always particularly struck by the fact that Marshall Field III, the scion of the great merchandising family of department-store owners, the archetypical success story of what Weberians call the Protestant Ethic, was psychoanalyzed by Gregory Zilboorg, one of the earliest influential Freudians in the United States, and emerged as an ardent supporter of left-wing causes who lost fortunes on liberal newspapers. There was evidently much more going on in the store's basement than I had suspected. Was there something that the American self-understanding had not sufficiently recognized or satisfied?

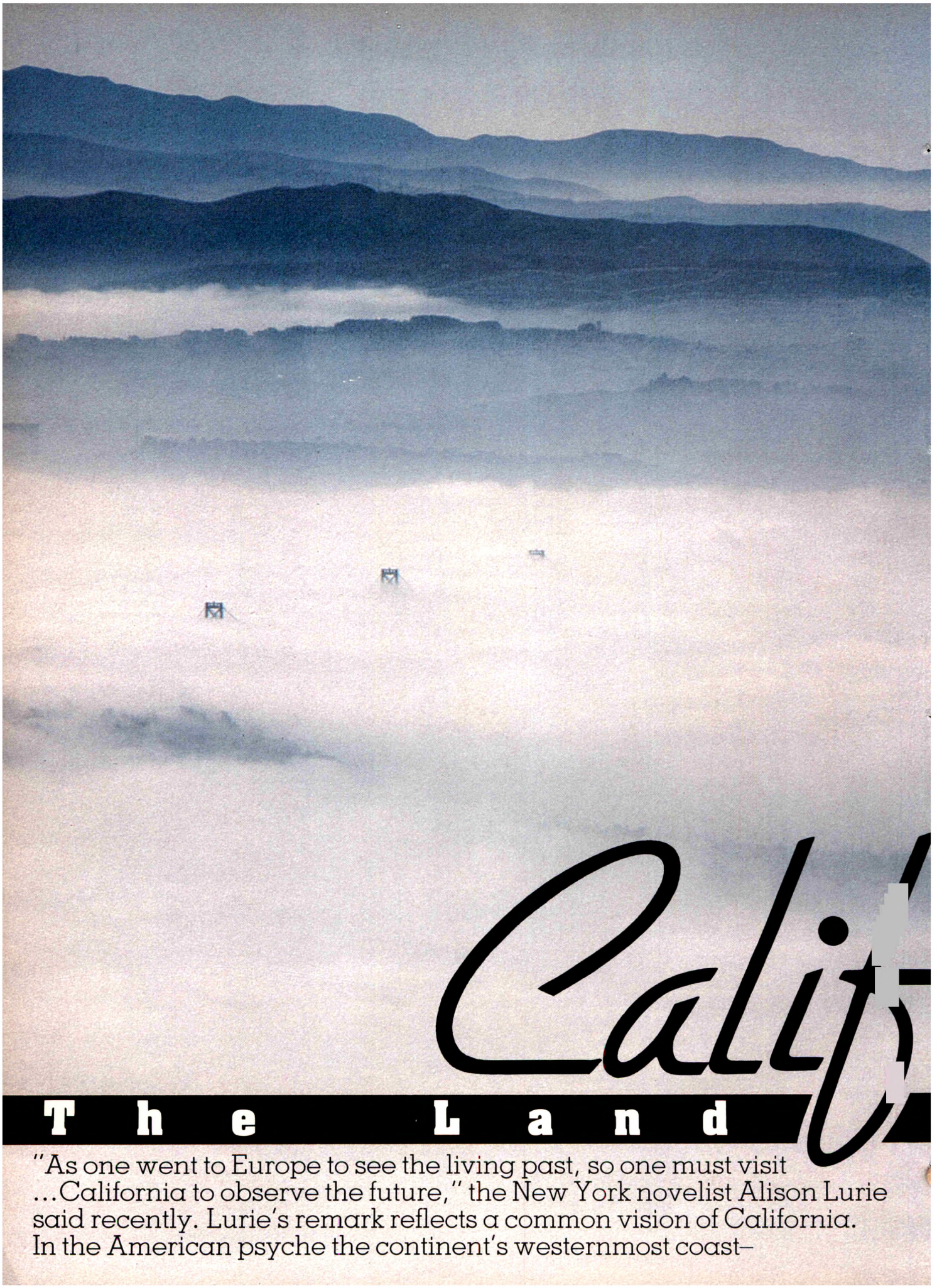
Once Americans had become convinced that there is indeed a basement to which psychiatrists have the key, their orientation became that of the *self*—the mysterious, free, unlimited center of their being. The dominant idea of our time is that all beliefs issue from the self and have no other validation.

Although nihilism and its accompanying existential despair are hardly more than a pose for Americans, the language derived from nihilism has become part of their educations. As a result, Americans today pursue happiness in ways determined by that language. They possess a whole arsenal of terms for talking about nothing—*caring*, *self-fulfillment*, *expanding consciousness* and so on, almost indefinitely. Nothing determinate, nothing that has a referent, as we saw in Woody Allen and David Riesman.

There is a straining to say something, a search for an inwardness that one knows one has, but it is still a cause without an effect. The inner seems to have no relation to the outer. American nihilism is a mood, a mood of moodiness, a vague disquiet. It is nihilism without the abyss.

Nihilism as a state of soul is revealed not so much in the lack of firm beliefs as in a chaos of the instincts or passions. People no longer believe in a natural hierarchy of the soul's varied and conflicting inclinations, and the religious and social traditions that provided a substitute for nature have crumbled.

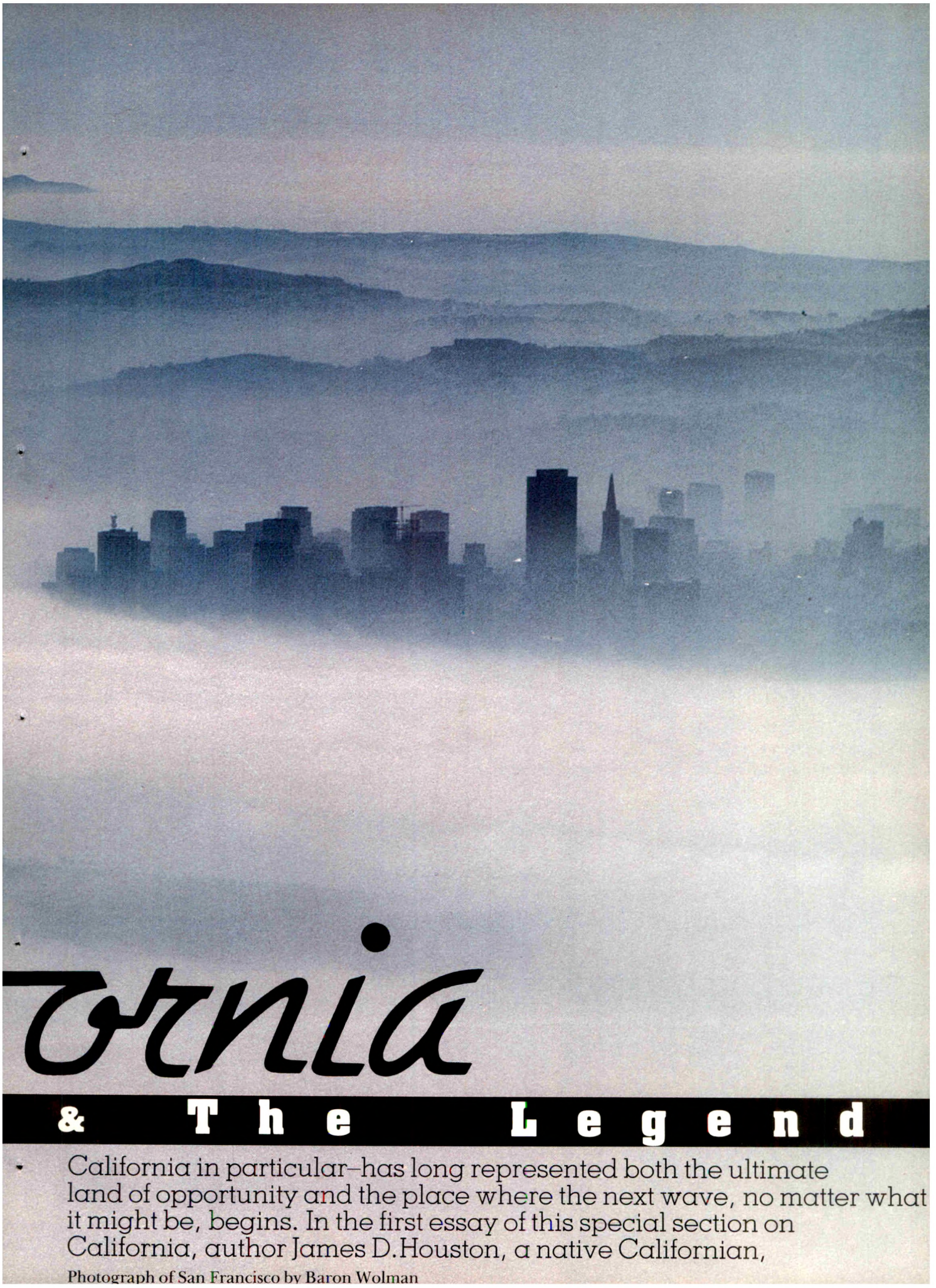
Nietzsche believed that the wild costume ball of the passions was both the disadvantage and the advantage of modern life. The evident disadvantage was the decomposition of unity or "personality," which in the long run would lead to psychic entropy. The advantage Nietzsche hoped for was that the richness and tension present in the modern soul might be the basis for the comprehensive new world views that would take seriously what had just been consigned to a spiritual ashcan. This richness consisted largely in thousands of years of inherited and now unsatisfied religious longings. ♦



Calif

The Land

"As one went to Europe to see the living past, so one must visit ...California to observe the future," the New York novelist Alison Lurie said recently. Lurie's remark reflects a common vision of California. In the American psyche the continent's westernmost coast–



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& The Legend

California in particular–has long represented both the ultimate land of opportunity and the place where the next wave, no matter what it might be, begins. In the first essay of this special section on California, author James D. Houston, a native Californian,

Photograph of San Francisco by Baron Wolman

delves into the history of the state as a fount of dreams. The earliest explorers described the area as an El Dorado of barely imaginable riches; what was remarkable about California, in contrast to other mythical paradises, was that these accounts were often confirmed by the experience of the first settlers. Finding a hospitable climate and bountiful soil, they soon discovered the promised gold and, later, oil. When filmmakers colonized Hollywood in the early 1900s, they fixed the state's reputation once and for all as the world's dream factory.

But there is another, equally valid side to the state. "The California of fact and the California of imagination shape and reshape each other," as historian Kevin Starr has written. The California of fact is a land where advanced agricultural research helps produce more farm exports than any other state, where in the past 15 years the renowned system of higher education has spawned a profusion of high-tech industries, and where a renaissance in the arts has raised Los Angeles and San Francisco up as rivals to the cultural bastions of the East. Another crucial fact: California, the nation's most populous state, is a magnet for immigrants, particularly those from Latin America and Asia. By 1985 these new arrivals had swelled the state's population to more than 26 million and given it one of the most diverse conglomerations of cultures in the world. The second article, "Panorama of the Land," is a photo essay that concentrates on the state's indisputably factual side. Yet among Californians the dream is never far from consciousness. As *The Economist* recently put it, the attraction of the state "is one of the spirit, helped by the way it satisfies the pocketbook. It is a place where people believe that dreams can come true."

California

The Lure of the Legend

By James D. Houston

Born in San Francisco, James D. Houston currently lives in Santa Cruz, California, where he teaches writing at a branch of the state university system. He has written 12 major works of fiction and nonfiction, including the novels A Native Son of the Golden West *(1971) and* Continental Drift *(1979) as well as* Californians: Searching for the Golden State *(1982), a vivid account of the people he has met traveling around his remarkably diverse state.*

When you are trying to locate a place, it is usually safe to begin with maps. I always do. But when the subject is California, you have to be careful. Maps of this region have been deceptive from the start. The earliest ones depicted an offshore island, separated from what is now Nevada by a long narrow channel. Some people say these may be the most reliable maps we have—geographically wrong, but psychologically close to the truth.



© 1987 James D. Houston

On my relief map of North America the place named California lies along the continent's western rim. A broad valley, shaped like a cucumber, occupies its center. Two great rivers water this valley, fed by a dozen tributaries flowing down from the massive range of high peaks that frame its eastern side—the Sierra Nevada. To the west, another range borders the valley, a long pattern of folds and ripples rising up from the Pacific Ocean. The two great rivers—the San Joaquin and the Sacramento—empty into delta lands that channel the water, via a wide gap in the coastal mountains, toward San Francisco's nearly landlocked and marvelously protected bay. To the north there are more mountains, extending toward Canada, though a political line cuts through them to mark where California ends and Oregon begins, just as another political line cuts through the desert that occupies the southern quarter of the state, a desert that extends deep into Mexico.

Is this then what we mean by *the place*—this complex system of ridges and waterways, this mosaic of microclimates and many terrains? Well, yes. But no. Not exactly. Not when the subject is the state of California. It is now almost impossible to separate the place on the map from the legends that have kept it alive in the imagination. And one would not want to keep them separate for very long. The beguiling attraction of California lives right there, in that interplay. Simply consider the Gold Rush of 1849, this region's formative event. How can a few thousand pounds of gleaming metal, no matter how native to the mountainsides and riverbeds, be disentangled from the noise and spectacle of the sudden multitude? Without the gold embedded in the landscape, of course, there would have been no Rush. But without the Rush, we would have only greed to remember, and bank accounts. No magic. No world-class legend to tickle the memory and stir the blood.

These two have never been easy to pry apart—the place on the continent, and the place in the mind—because the legends actually came first. The dream, the expectation of something remarkable out there at the farthest edge of the New World, lived in the minds of the earliest explorers before they ever glimpsed the monumental headlands or dipped their hands into the bottomlands of the luscious coastal valleys. It was a far western version of El Dorado that originates in a 16th-century novel by Garcia Ordóñez de Montalvo called *The Adventures of Esplandián*. There California is named and described for the first time—a science-fiction name, in those days, as unearthly as Atlantis or Utopia. It was a mythical island very near the gates of the Terrestrial Paradise, inhabited by Amazons, made impregnable by steep cliffs and rocky shores, and in this whole island, "there was no metal but gold."

Visions Fulfilled

California was not the first place on Earth to get this type of advance billing. Explorations of every kind have been propelled by heady visions and improbable dreams. An intriguing feature of this region's history is the extent to which its array of natural endowments—climate and landscape and bountiful resources—lived up to some of the visions, fleshed out the hopes for a blessed and promised land.

The rich potential of the valleys and alluvial plains was evident to the first overland travelers. "All the soil is black and loamy," wrote Fray Juan Crespi, chaplain with the Portolá expedition, as they crossed the Los Angeles basin in the summer of 1769, "and is capable of producing every kind of grain and fruit which may be planted."

It proved to be ideal for farming and ranching, and for 70 years or so this appeared to be what the earth of California had to offer—extensive grazing lands for cattle, prime soil for wine grapes and wheat. It was the discovery of gold that brought the boomtown mentality to an otherwise quietly fertile outpost. When this remote western landscape actually delivered pockets and seams of the fabled ore so many adventurers had dreamed about, the world's imagination had a new touchstone. Maybe there was an El Dorado after all!

A few decades later the legend was recharged and reinforced when the landscape delivered up another treasure, dark and sticky, that had been waiting for millenia, locked in subterranean pools and caverns. Fifty or sixty million years ago, when the modern coastal city of Long Beach was underwater and the central valley was an inland sea, uncountable generations of plankton sifted downward, leaving tiny skeletons to be transmuted into oil. As these ancient deposits were discovered, one by one—the Doheny strike in Los Angeles in 1892, the Lakeview Gusher in the lower San Joaquin Valley in 1910, the phenomenal find at Signal Hill near Long Beach in the early 1920s (in barrels per hectare the richest in the world)—fortunes accumulated, both private and corporate, that far surpassed the wealth created by the Gold Rush. The timing, moreover, seems uncanny, looking back, because during the same era, while the substrata were releasing their hoard of black gold, California was developing as a world headquarters for the machine that would be a prime consumer: the automobile, with its own by-products, the car culture and the drive-in style of life. (There are now more registered motor vehicles in California—over 17 million—than there are people in the seven nearest western states.)

Meanwhile, another resource, another feature of the place itself—the weather—had fueled three new industries. The first was real estate. From the 1870s onward, land developers began to package the climate, telling easterners that California offered "the loveliest skies, the mildest winters, the most healthful region, in the whole United States." The second was cinema. Early filmmakers, looking for a way to put some distance between themselves and New Jersey, where Thomas Edison was trying to control the patents on filmmaking equipment, crossed the continent to southern California. They found a number of things that encouraged them to stay: varied terrain, an abundance of light and over 300 clear-sky days in any given year, weather that made the area ideal for outdoor and location shooting.

Hollywood and aviation have at least that much in common. In the early days of flying, pilots and designers also found the southern California climate ideal for testing planes, for taking off and landing. Though Charles Lindbergh's *Spirit of St. Louis* departed from New York in 1927 to make the first trans-Atlantic flight,

the plane was designed in San Diego. The demands of World War II gave this fledgling industry size and shape. One thing led to another. Nowadays, in the endlessly sunny deserts north of Los Angeles, while the U.S. Air Force tests its Space Age capsules and weaponry, the spirit of aerial adventure lives on in the work of Paul McReady, the aviation renegade who has developed a record-setting series of engineless and human-powered aircraft.

In this way, time and time again, some feature of the place we call California has led to some new opportunity or perception; and these discoveries in turn have advanced the reputation and the legend of the place.

Looking Toward the Pacific

Location itself can be described this way.

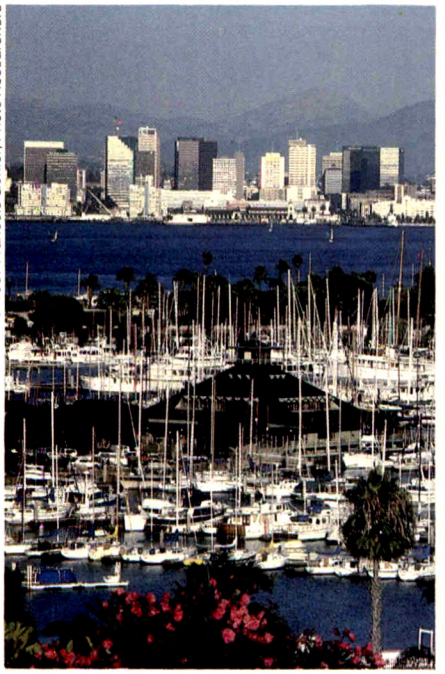
Simply as a physical creation, the 1600-kilometer coastline, from Crescent City in the far north to Point Loma in the far south, is one of the world's most widely praised and often visited beauty zones. Because of its numerous blessings, Californians have hugged this coast from the earliest days of European settlement, spreading out around the long necklace of forts, mission towns and ports founded by the Spanish. This is still where most Californians live, work and play. Some 80 percent of the state's 25 million inhabitants now reside within a band about 65 kilometers wide, extending along the ocean from Santa Rosa, north of San Francisco, to the Mexican border. They eat fruits and vegetables trucked in from the central valley, of course; and their water comes from somewhere farther inland and higher up—the reservoirs in the Sierras. But they work along the coast—in San Diego, in the Los Angeles basin, in the extended megalopolis surrounding San Francisco Bay. And the coastline is their principal recreation zone: the beaches, the fishing and sailing in offshore waters, the stirring scenery along the coastal highway, the drop-off cliffs that launch hang-gliders and hot-air balloons, the trails and hot springs and campsites throughout the many ridges of the long Coast Range.

Because of its location, this coast which shapes the curving outline of the state has also helped to shape its history. By the late 18th century Spain, England, Russia and the United States were all eyeing the strategic advantages of California's as-yet-undeveloped ports and harbors in their long-distance struggle for control of Pacific Basin trade and trading routes.

Because it faces west, this coast is where most trans-Pacific travelers have tended to land and where immigrants from Asia have settled. Among the people of Asian background now in the United States, about 40 percent live in California. They come from China, Japan, Korea, the Philippines, Vietnam, Taiwan, India, Pakistan, Cambodia and Hong Kong. In San Francisco, where "Chinatown" has been part of the city's Pacific Rim mystique for over a hundred years, almost half the population is now of Asian or Pacific Island background. In addition to the 150,000 people of Chinese descent, there are an estimated

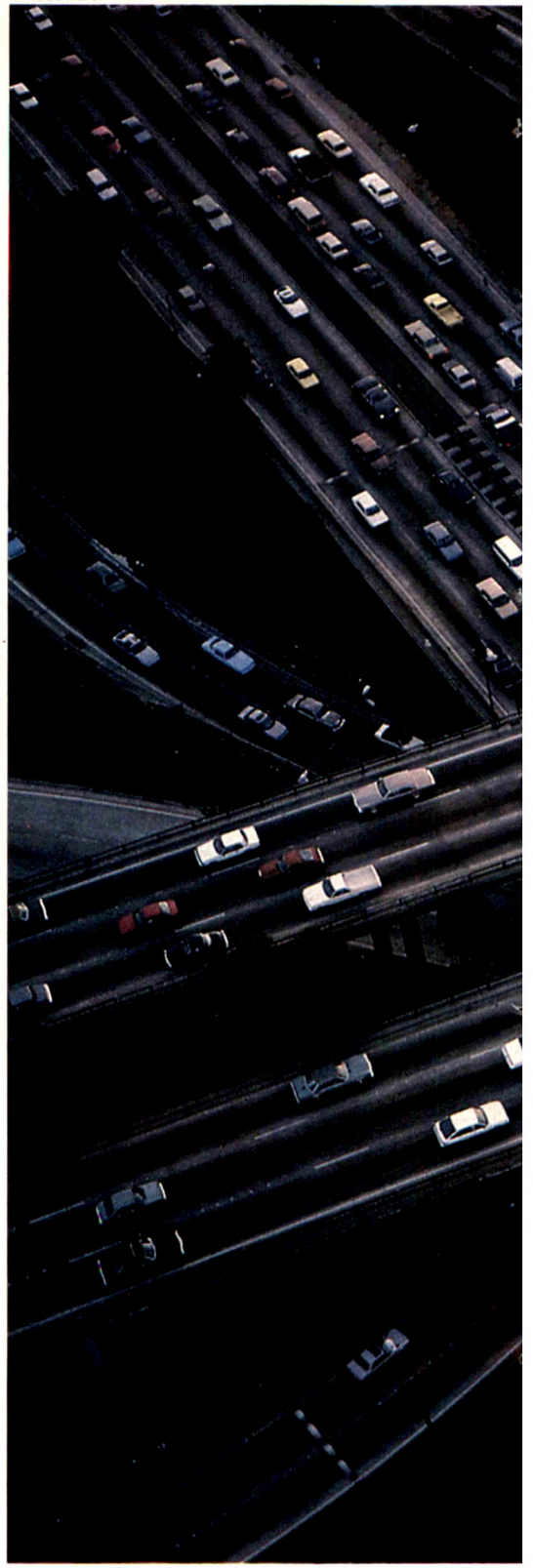


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Above: a freeway interchange in Los Angeles. Top left: a mural in a Hispanic neighborhood of Los Angeles. Above left: the bay and skyline of California's southernmost city, San Diego.



100,000 Filipinos in San Francisco, along with the largest Samoan and Tongan gathering anywhere outside the mid-Pacific.

The Asian presence, such a vital feature of this state's unique cultural mix, is much more than a matter of numbers. It is felt in politics, where California's secretary of state, March Fong Eu, is a Chinese-American woman and two members of Congress—Norman Mineta and Robert Matsui—are of Japanese ancestry. It is felt in the architecture, in eating habits, in the spread of certain ideas and belief systems—such as zen and yoga—in the practice of martial arts and healing arts, as well as in the evolution of the economy. In 1982, for the first time, U.S. trade with Atlantic nations was surpassed by its trade with nations across the Pacific, and about one-third of this—$42,500 million—went through the state of California.

Location has also played a significant role in the cultural ties with Latin America. Where California meets Mexico there is not much in the landscape to suggest that one country has ended and another begun. The heat and the arid terrain of the southwestern desert are continuous, in the same way that there has been a continuum of language and culture for centuries. The region was originally a single political unit, Baja and Alta California, first a province of Spain, then a province of Mexico. The impact of that era is still felt in the state's principal place names, most of which are Spanish—from the notorious earthquake fault line called San Andreas (named for a lake early explorers happened to camp near, on the Day of Saint Andrew) to the magnificent Sierra Nevada (snow-covered mountain range).

After the first overland expedition led by Captain Gasper de Portolá in 1769, there began a back-and-forth flow of traffic through these lands—soldiers, priests, Indians, settlers—that has never ceased. It has continued and increased and is now being amplified by refugees heading north out of Nicaragua and Guatemala and

El Salvador. Estimates for people of Hispanic origin currently living in California hover around five million, about 20 percent of the total. Some have been here for six generations and are millionaires; others have been here for six days and are still looking for work.

Theirs is a unique situation, fostered by the borderland continuities. Most American ethnic groups, if they want to stay in touch with the homeland, have an ocean to cross. As the years go by, the connections get diluted. Customs drift away, along with the language. Not so in the southwestern United States, where Los Angeles is said to be the second largest Mexican city, with a greater Spanish-speaking population than Guadalajara.

A Laboratory for Change

It is the look of this coastline from across the continent, of course, that has had such a profound effect on what we might call the region's psychological history. Most travelers have come from somewhere east. Because of its place in history, because it was settled late and happens to occupy the continent's farthest edge, the West Coast has been viewed as some final stopping place, the conclusion of that great thrust and opening outward from Europe that began 500 years ago. No one has voiced this more deliberately and passionately than the poet Robinson Jeffers, who built a house along the rugged California coast in the town of Carmel. For him, the meeting of shore and water was not only a scene of wild and holy splendor; it was the cultural cliff-edge, the end of the line, where lives culminate, where cross-continental destinies are somehow completed. This theme propels one of his early poems, "Continent's End" (1924):

> I gazing at the boundaries of granite and spray,
> the established sea-marks, felt behind me
> Mountain and plain, the immense breadth of the
> continent, before me the mass and doubled stretch
> of water.

If there is a sense of destiny in the California atmosphere, one might well ask, where do we see it in the life of the region? I believe it has a great deal to do with the state's reputation as a laboratory for change and transformation. Ever since the Gold Rush this has been seen as a place you can travel to in order to change your luck or your income or your love life, to start over or to play the final card.

Distance figures in this reputation too. California has long seemed to be a realm apart, both culturally and geographically, well removed from the political centers attempting to control it. Even as a province of Mexico it was thousands of kilometers and several weeks from the viceroy's chambers in Mexico City. Freer of constraints that inhibit thought and behavior in more tradition-bound locales, it became a place where things can be attempted, where experiments can be acted out. Such a reputation is both a blessing and a curse. It leads to boldness in both directions, the release of energy both creative and destructive. Desperate people still travel as far west as they can go in order to take a final and perhaps symbolic leap off the Golden Gate Bridge. Others make this same trip in search of new beginnings. Because a generation of electronics wizards came west in the 1950s and '60s, the microprocessor was developed in Santa Clara in 1971.

The growth of this Silicon Valley area is a good, recent example of the creative vitality that has remained alive in the air since the first days of statehood. In the 1960s, Silicon Valley—the informal name for the high-tech center south of San Francisco—did not exist in the public imagination. During the 1970s it emerged, seemingly out of nowhere, as the world's electronics headquarters. With crucial support from research labs at nearby Stanford University and the University of California, Berkeley, and with an environment that encouraged entrepreneurial risk, it was a New Age version of the Gold Rush. Once again fortunes were being made overnight. By the mid-1980s the fever had subsided, but the industry was still a major force in regional expansion. The San Jose area, for example, continues to grow at the rate of about 300 people per week, and *The San Jose Mercury News* still has a Sunday employment section of over 40 pages.

In such an atmosphere the arts too have flourished. During the 1950s the poets and novelists of the charismatic Beat Generation were headquartered in San Francisco. In the 1960s the counterculture erupted there, finding its voice in the music of Janis Joplin, Joan Baez, John Fogerty, the Jefferson Airplane and the Grateful Dead. Today more writers live in California than in any part of the United States outside the Boston-New York-Washington axis. The state's current corps of well-known authors ranges from novelist Joan Didion and science-fiction veteran Ray Bradbury to playwright/director Luis Valdez, short-story master Alice Adams and Beat Generation poet/publisher Lawrence Ferlinghetti. In the San Francisco Bay area alone one finds novelists Alice Walker, Diane Johnson, Herbert Gold and Evan Connell, as well as poets Robert Duncan, Robert Hass and the Polish émigré and Nobel laureate Czeslaw Milosz.

But there is no question that the heaviest concentration of artistic talent is found in the south, where Los Angeles has emerged during the past 15 years as a pace-setting center for the visual arts, contemporary architecture, design and fashion. In 1986 the new Museum of Contemporary Art opened within weeks of a major expansion by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art while the world's most heavily endowed art museum, the J. Paul Getty, began building a new home with a projected 1992 opening. This flowering goes hand in hand with the area's size and astonishing wealth. Between 1980 and 1986, Los Angeles County took in more new residents (818,700) than any other county in the nation. With over eight million people, it now holds one-third of the state's entire population. What's more, if the region within an 80-kilometer radius of the Los Angeles city hall were an independent country, it would rank 15th on a world scale of gross national product, ahead of India and Australia, just behind Poland, the Netherlands and Spain.

A land of newcomers and immigrants, risk-takers, seekers and adventurers, California is often called "the nation's testing ground" or its "early warning system." Other Americans watch from afar, for signs of what may be heading their way. The political views of Ronald Reagan, for example, were affecting Californians

some 14 years before he became President. He was elected governor in 1966, after six terms as head of the Screen Actors Guild. In 1974 he was replaced by Jerry Brown, as liberal as Reagan is conservative. During his first term Brown seemed to embody the spirit of the consciousness-raising 1970s. His inner circle included the head of San Francisco's Zen Center and Gary Snyder, the Pulitzer Prize-winning poet and environmental activist. Brown too had eyes on the White House and was a strong contender for the Democratic nomination in 1976. But the pendulum had already begun to swing back the other way, and in 1982 he was replaced by George Deukmejian, a Republican law-and-order candidate and former state attorney general. His opponent, Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley, had been described as the state's best-liked Democrat. With over seven and a half million votes cast, Bradley lost by 100,000, a percentage point away from being the nation's first black governor.

A Delicate Balance

The legends of California take many shapes. They are as varied as its landscapes and microclimates. It is important to remember, for example, that the oil boom, brought to a head by the first major strikes in the San Joaquin Valley in 1909 and 1910, had a kind of prologue in the 1906 earthquake that wrecked a large piece of San Francisco. Both episodes began underground, caused by innate features of the western earth that have shaped both history and mythology. There had been other fearful quakes in California since settlement began, but this was the one that set a city on fire and first drew widespread attention to something geologists have come to view as a principal feature in the physical life of the place—that 800-kilometer crease through the landscape, the San Andreas Fault.

In a similar way the prologue to the Gold Rush is the story of the ill-fated Donner Party of 1846, the 82 settlers who started across the country too late from St. Louis, fell prey to squabbling along the trail, entered the Sierra Nevada range well past the season when it was considered safe to cross, and thus found themselves snowbound and starving in the early winter. To stay alive, the 47 survivors had to eat their pack animals, their shoes, bark and mice, and in the end their own dead. It is one of the most notorious events in the history of the American West. Certainly it provides an unavoidable counterpoint to the legends of fulfillment and abundance. It is a story from a region where the weather can turn on you in a day or an hour, and the landscape is no longer an ally or bountiful provider; it is an adversary, or perhaps a mentor one can never afford to take for granted.

The message that comes down to us from the Donner Party contains a warning not unlike the warnings of John Muir, the great naturalist and patriarch conservationist who began to tramp the Sierra Nevada range some 20 years later. Be attentive to this land and its habits, he said; learn to enjoy it but never let down your guard.

The power of the high country so filled Muir with awe and wonder that he devoted his life to preserving as much of this far western landscape as he could. He worked to save Yosemite Valley, and succeeded. He founded the Sierra Club, today's politically powerful environmentalists, and in his writings he gave voice to an ecological consciousness—a reverence for natural beauty and respect for the interlocking cycles of the Earth—that speaks ever louder as the years go by.

One of the large California ironies is the way its very virtues sometimes seem fated to bring about the state's undoing. This region still draws people at a phenomenal rate, continuing to grow by a thousand or more per day, about half by birth and half by in-migration. As the demands on space and resources intensify, one sees examples everywhere of how some cycle of nature is overlooked, or given low priority, in the rush to develop a parcel of real estate or maximize income or expand a city: in a new housing subdivision, built across a fault line, half a dozen duplexes are tipped off their foundations by a quake; in the lower San Joaquin, overirrigation and poor drainage fill 40,000 hectares of cropland with plant-killing salts and minerals; while a spectacular lake in the high Sierra drops 15 meters in 50 years in order to service a thirsty city 500 kilometers south.

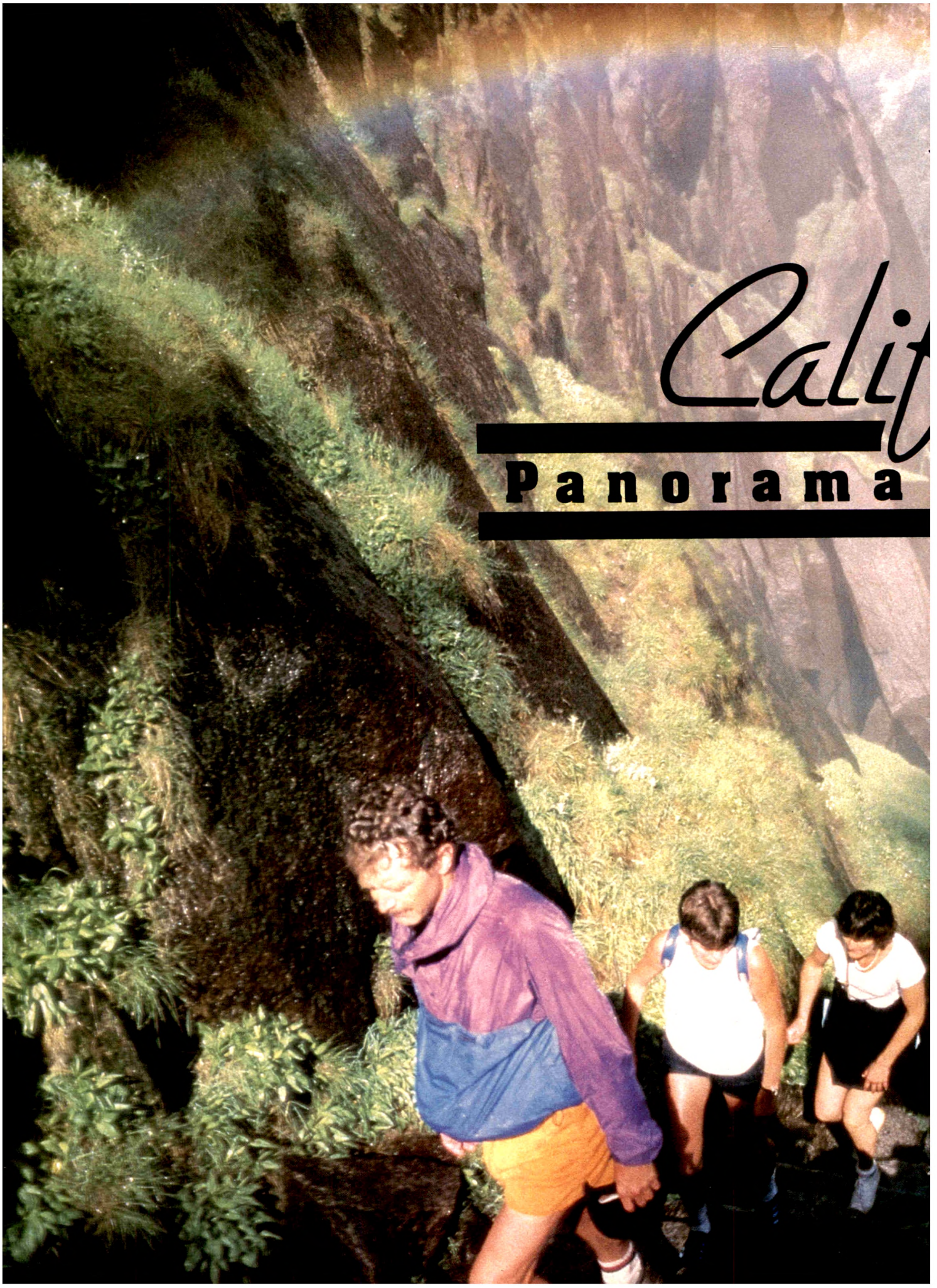
The succession of such events, together with the ongoing debates over river use, air quality, the coastal impact of offshore drilling and so on, is leading us toward a revision of the original California legend. Gradually Californians are discovering, or rediscovering, that this is not a cornucopia of limitless reserves, but a well-endowed place with very specific limits that have to be acknowledged and honored. And these limits, too, are fundamental features of the place—weather patterns, tidal patterns, wind and water flow, cycles in the soil and in the Earth beneath the soil.

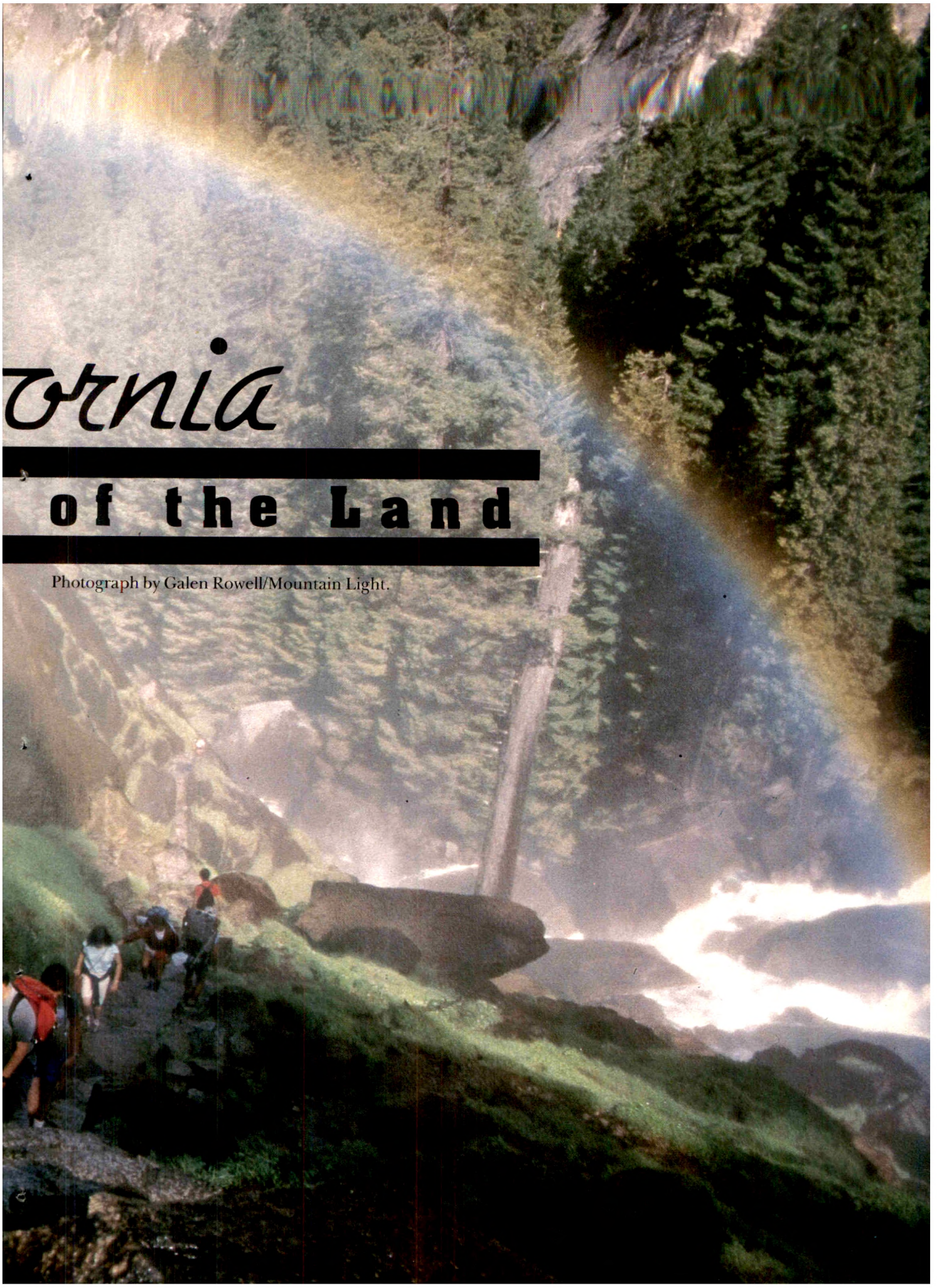
The legend dies hard, however, the one with the boomtown voice saying, "Take what you want while the taking is good." And perhaps we can still learn from the native Indian tribes who once flourished in this part of the world. They understood that in order to survive it was important to find a way to live in harmony with the whole environment. If one failed to do so, the penalty could be severe.

Up along the north coast, the Yurok Indians expressed this via a World Renewal dance, described here in anthropologist Theodora Kroeber's account:

> To a world in balance, the flat Earth's rise and fall, as it floats on Underneath Ocean, is almost imperceptible and nothing is disturbed by it. Doctors know that to keep this balance, the people must dance the World Renewal dances, bringing their feet down strong and hard on the Earth. If they are careless about this, it tips up and if it tips more than a very little, there are strange and terrible misplacements.

In this ancient story, life is a balancing act, and the Earth is a delicately hinged support system one must revere and respect. Be attentive, the legend tells us, be wary in the land of promise, because this is really a land of two promises, where abundant possibilities and the potential for disaster live side by side. ♦


Calif
Panorama



ornia of the Land

Photograph by Galen Rowell/Mountain Light.

California may well be a land of legends and dreams, but it is also a real place with real people, as depicted in this panorama of photographs. It is an extraordinary region of contrast and paradox. The culture of Los Angeles, for example, is linked with the popular entertainment world of Hollywood, but in recent years a blossoming of the high arts—new museums, theaters, dance companies—has taken place there. Similarly, the boom of high-tech industry in Silicon Valley has brought thousands of outsiders to the state, but many of these people came because California offered a chance to live close to nature, sea and beaches, mountains and forests. In spite of its vast stretches of pristine wilderness including Yosemite and Sequoia National Parks, California is also a land of booming cities and fertile farms. The vineyards around San Francisco are world famous, while nearly every variety of fruit and vegetable grows in the vast Central Valley. The state's great institutions of higher learning such as Stanford, Cal Tech and the University of California draw some of the world's best scientists. In truth, so much in California has a quality of seeming larger than life, from the height of its mountains to the beauty of its beaches to the size of its redwood trees. Yet California is more than a movie set of pretty scenery. It is a land made rich by the many people who have come there on many different quests: missionaries and goldminers, actors and artists, scientists and scholars, farmers and futurists. Californians, it has been said, are not mere inhabitants of a state but a race of people drawn by the dream.

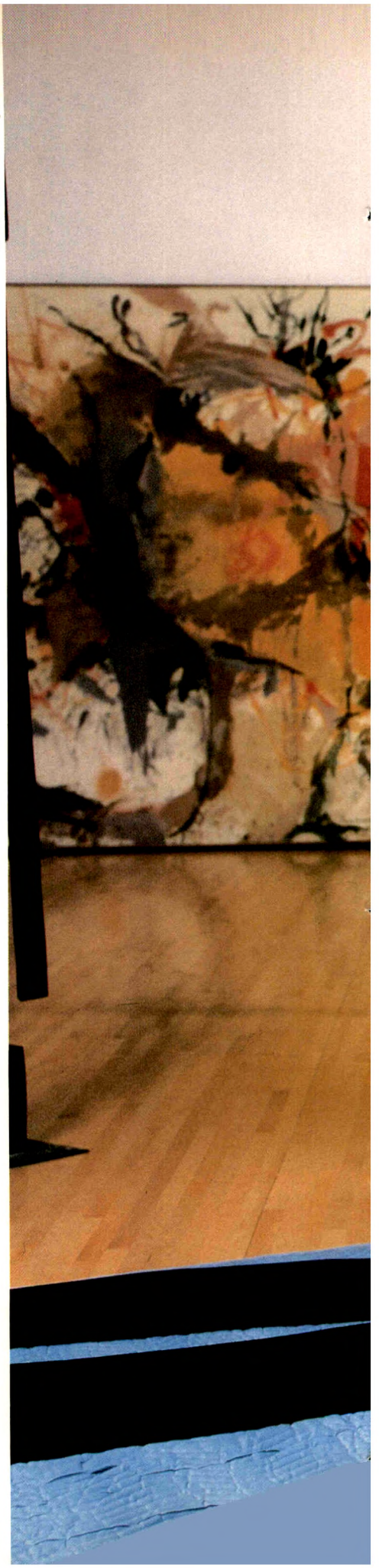
◂ *Overleaf: Rainbow-crowned hikers in the Sierra Nevada mountains.*

The Culture of L.A.

'L.A....is full of vitality still, full of fun and wealth. The refugees are still flocking to this haven beyond the deserts, the men of brilliance are still at work in labs and laboratories and studios from Malibu to Irvine. Almost every development of Western thought, from space research to comparative linguistics to Transcendental Lung Control, finds its niche, its expression and its encouragement somewhere in this metropolis. Surveyed in the morning from one of its mountain belvederes, Los Angeles really does look one of the classic cities, one of the archetypes.'

Jan Morris, 1985

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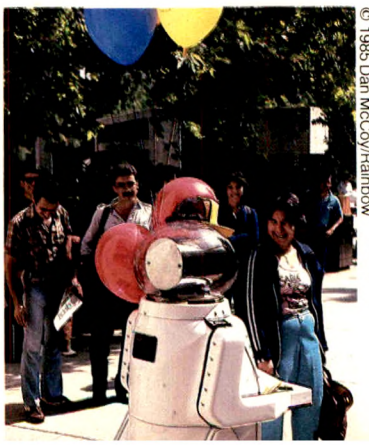
Richard Koshalek, director of the Museum of Contemporary Art, one of Los Angeles's new world-class art museums.





Harald Sund, The Image Bank

The Hoover Tower at Stanford University.



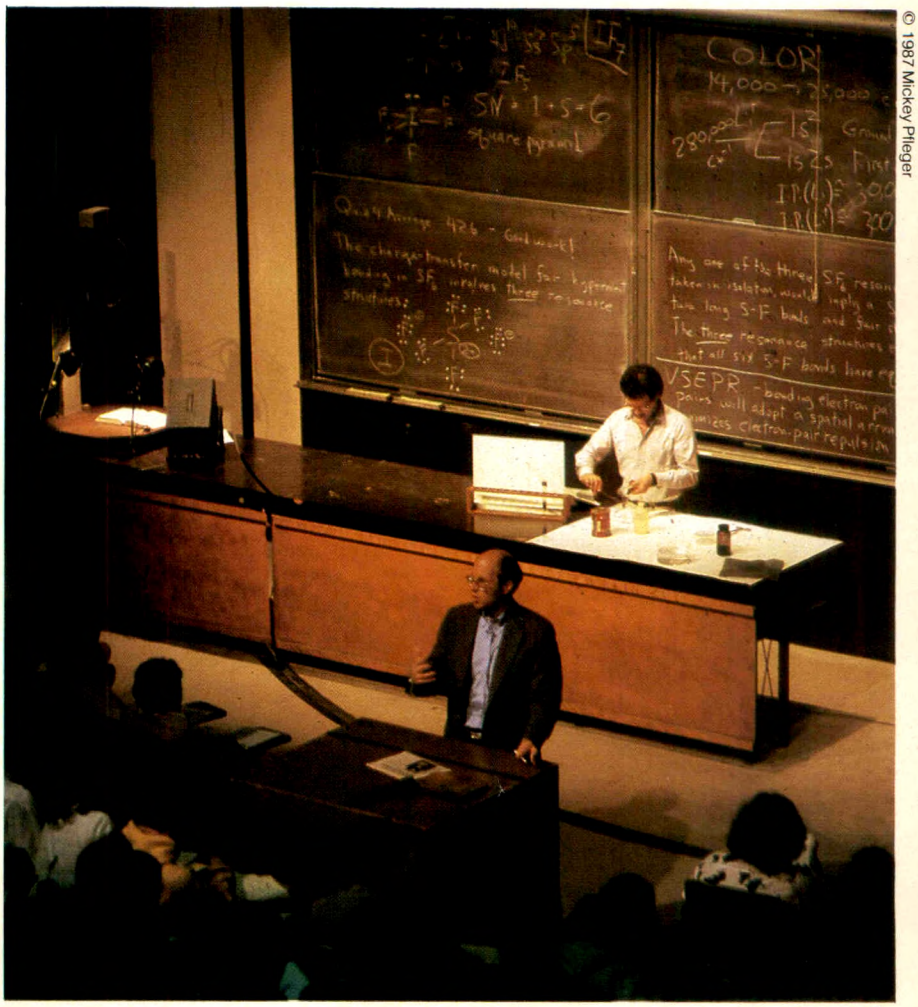
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A robot at the University of Southern California.

Education and Science

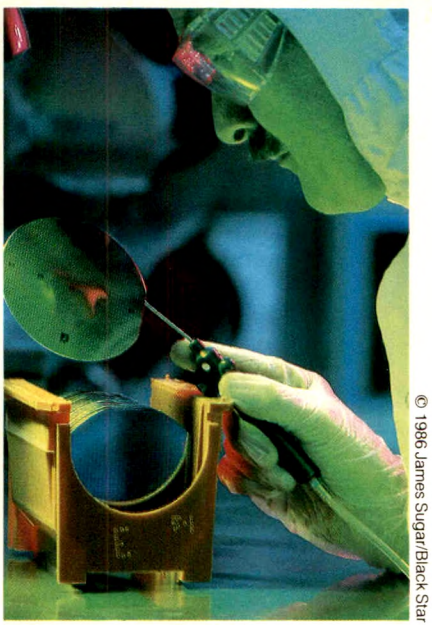
'All three of California's most respected institutions of higher education—the University of California, California Institute of Technology and Stanford University—have sought to establish their excellence in scientific and technological fields.... This concentration has helped make California the nation's leading center of advanced work in such economically applicable areas as the natural sciences, mathematics, biology, chemistry, physics and engineering. By the early 1960s, California became the home to far more Nobel laureates than any other region of the country, a trend that has continued to the present day.'

Joel Kotkin and Paul Grabowicz, 1982



© 1987 Mickey Pfleger

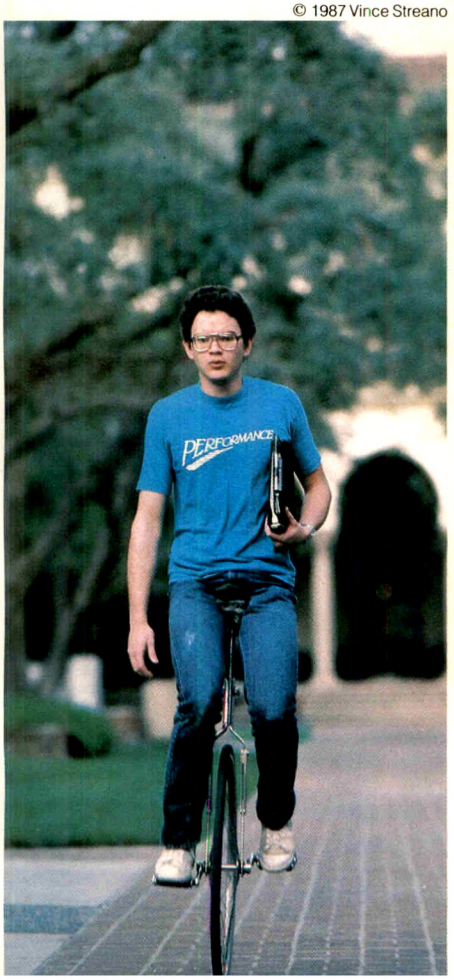
A science class at the University of California, Berkeley.



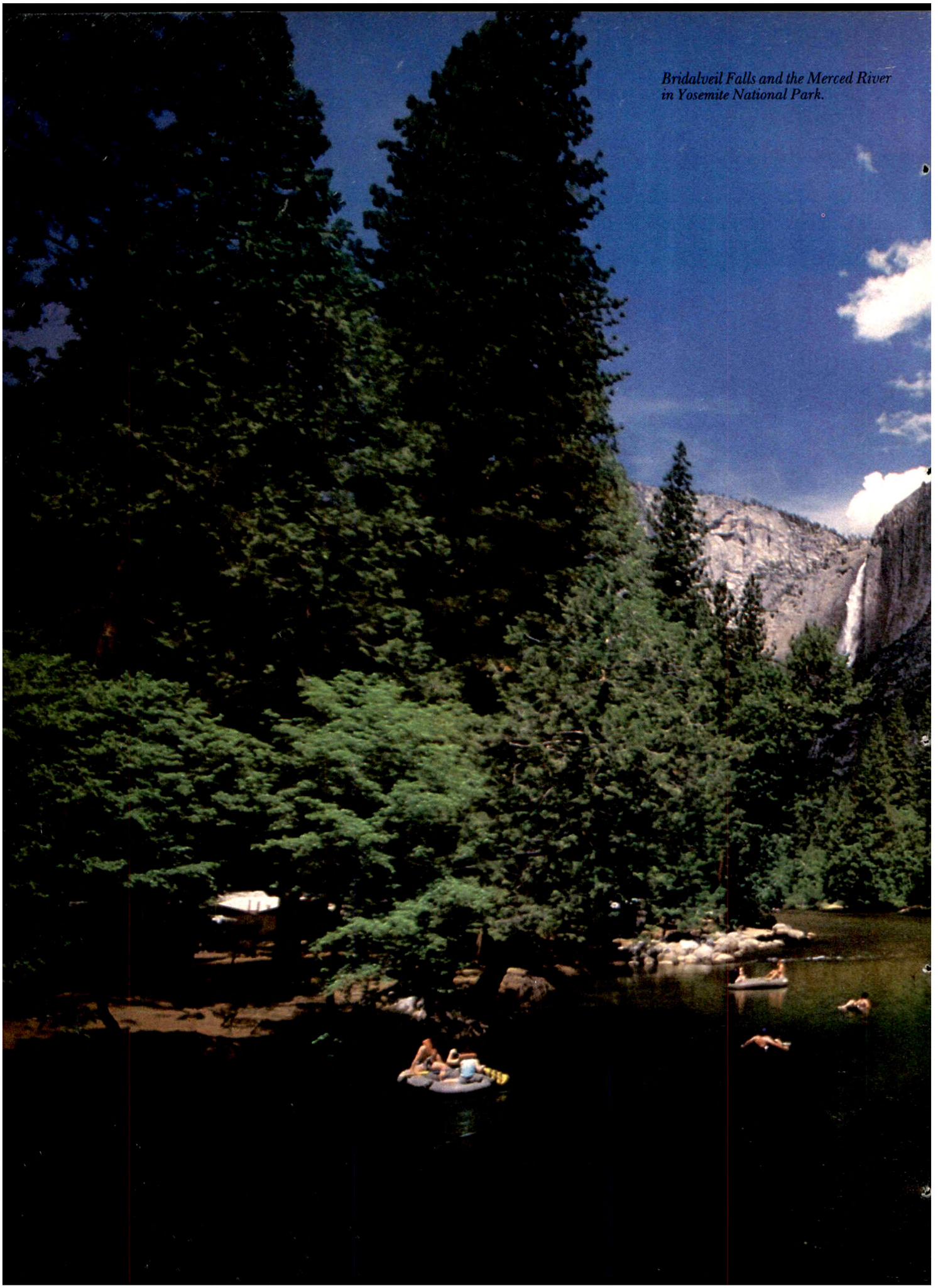
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Researcher in a Silicon Valley laboratory.

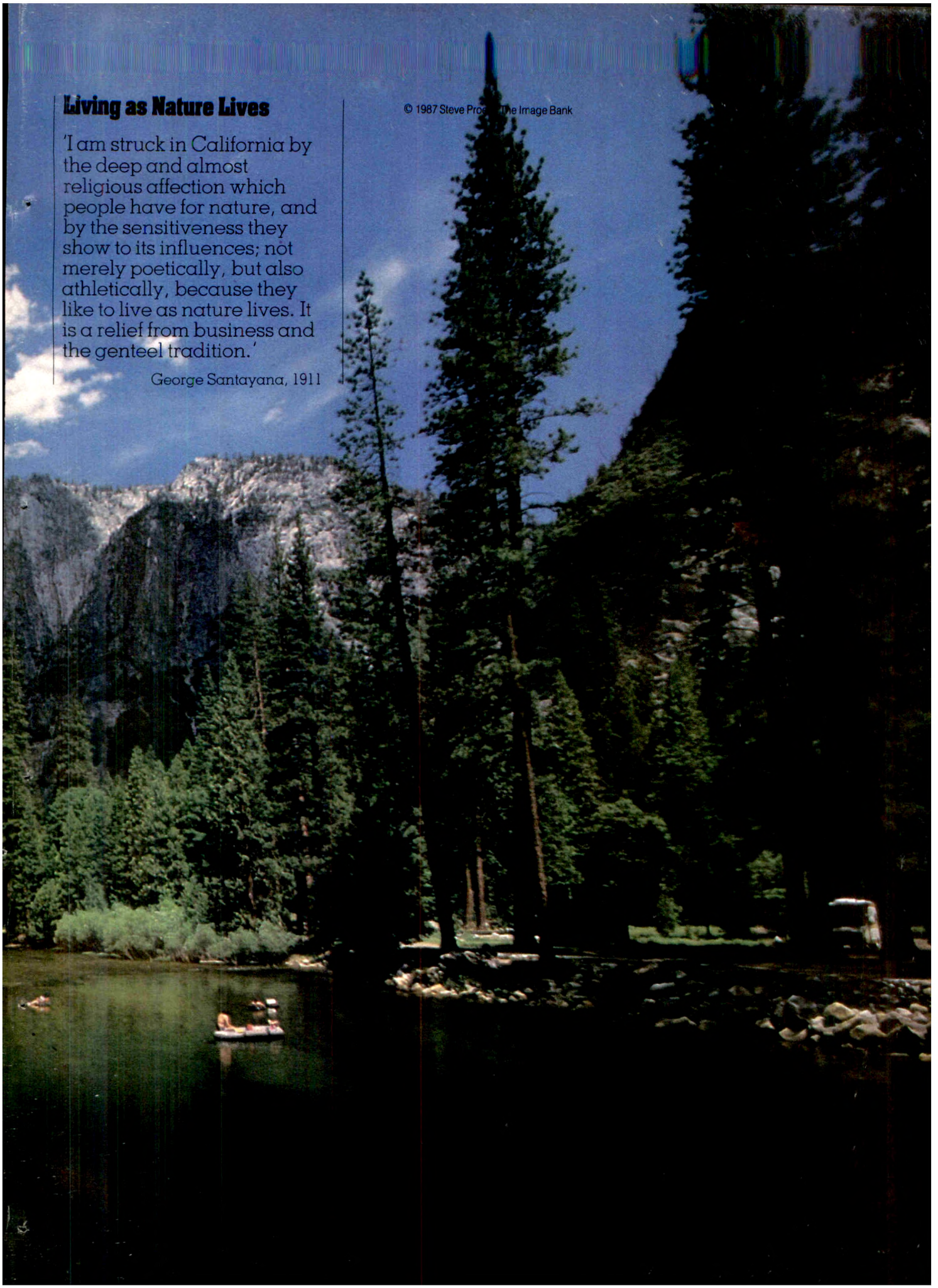
© 1987 Vince Streano



A student at the California Institute of Technology.



Bridalveil Falls and the Merced River in Yosemite National Park.



Living as Nature Lives

'I am struck in California by the deep and almost religious affection which people have for nature, and by the sensitiveness they show to its influences; not merely poetically, but also athletically, because they like to live as nature lives. It is a relief from business and the genteel tradition.'

George Santayana, 1911

© 1987 Steve Proc The Image Bank

A Fragrant and Fertile Land

'Fresno had great early appeal for me. It had a fine smell of dust, of the desert, of rocks baking in the sun, of sand with cactus growing out of it, of water flowing in rivers and ditches, of orchards and vineyards set out in great geometric patterns, of leaf and blossom and fruit. It also had all of the smells of rot, decay and ferment: the great heaps of grape pulp and skin at the wineries sent a smell all through the town if there was a little wind stirring.... There was also always the smell of various green things, or growing things—parsley, mint, basil, onions, bell peppers, tomatoes, cucumbers, and so on and so forth. All of these things were a part of the place, and very quickly a part of me.'

William Saroyan, 1972

© 1985 John Vachon, The Image Bank



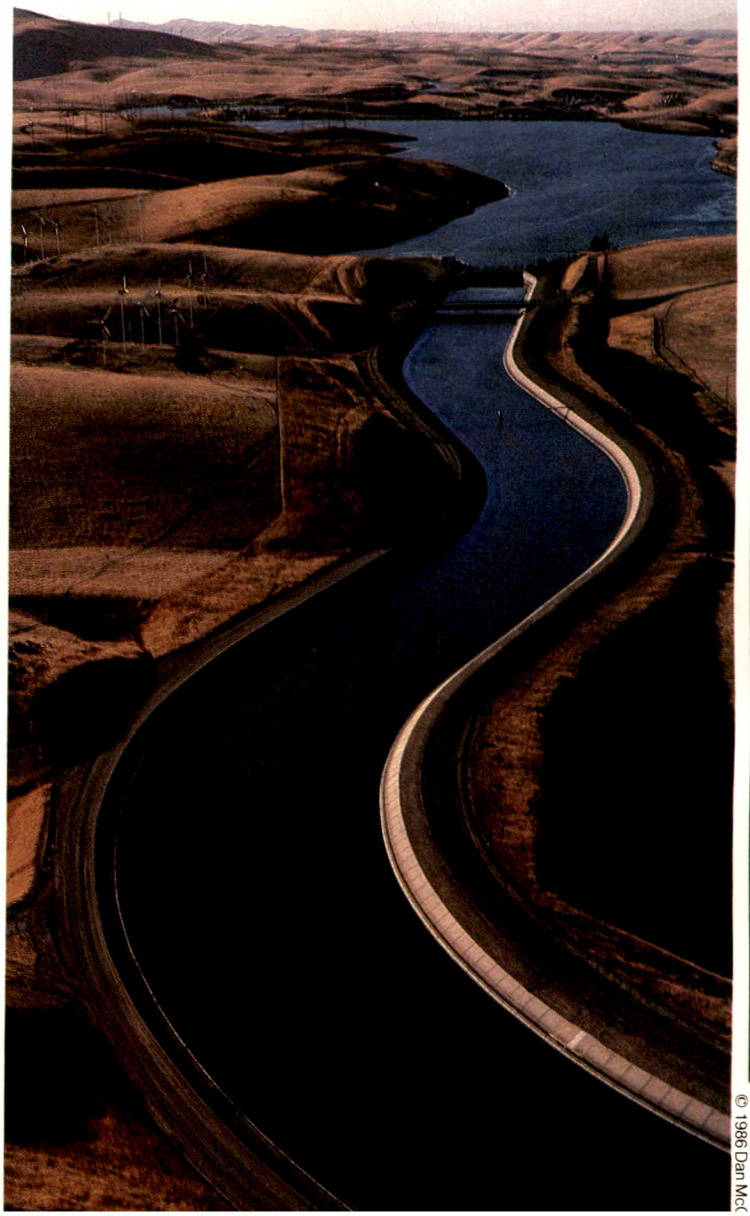
Oranges in southern California.



© 1987 Peter Menzel, Wheeler Pictures



Lettuce in the Salinas Valley.



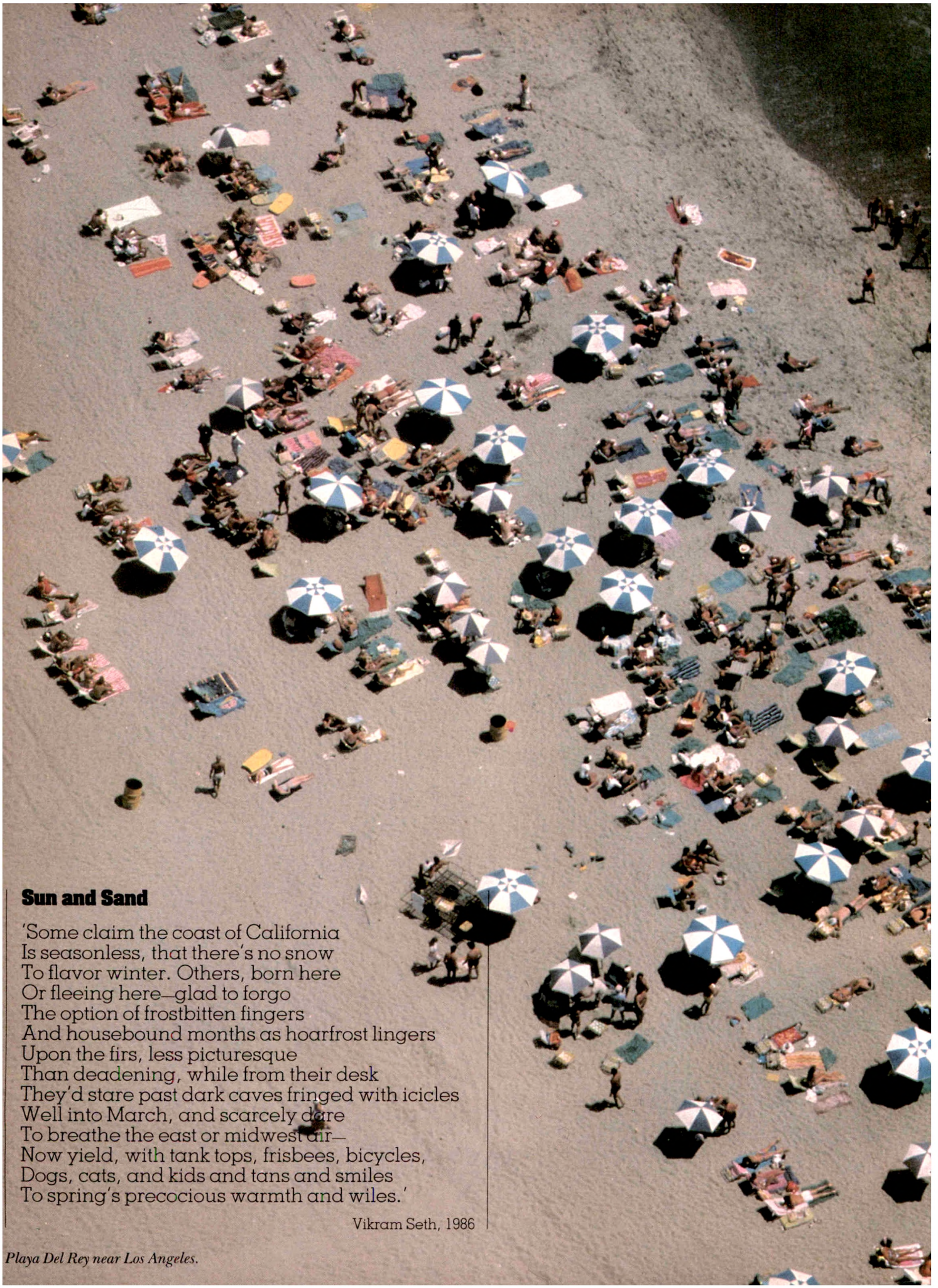
The Los Angeles Aqueduct, which brings water to the city from the Sierra Nevada slopes 240 kilometers away.

© 1986 Dan Mc

© 1986 Peter Menzel, Wheeler Pictures



Irrigated field in the Central Valley, the heart of the state's $14,000-million-a-year agricultural industry.

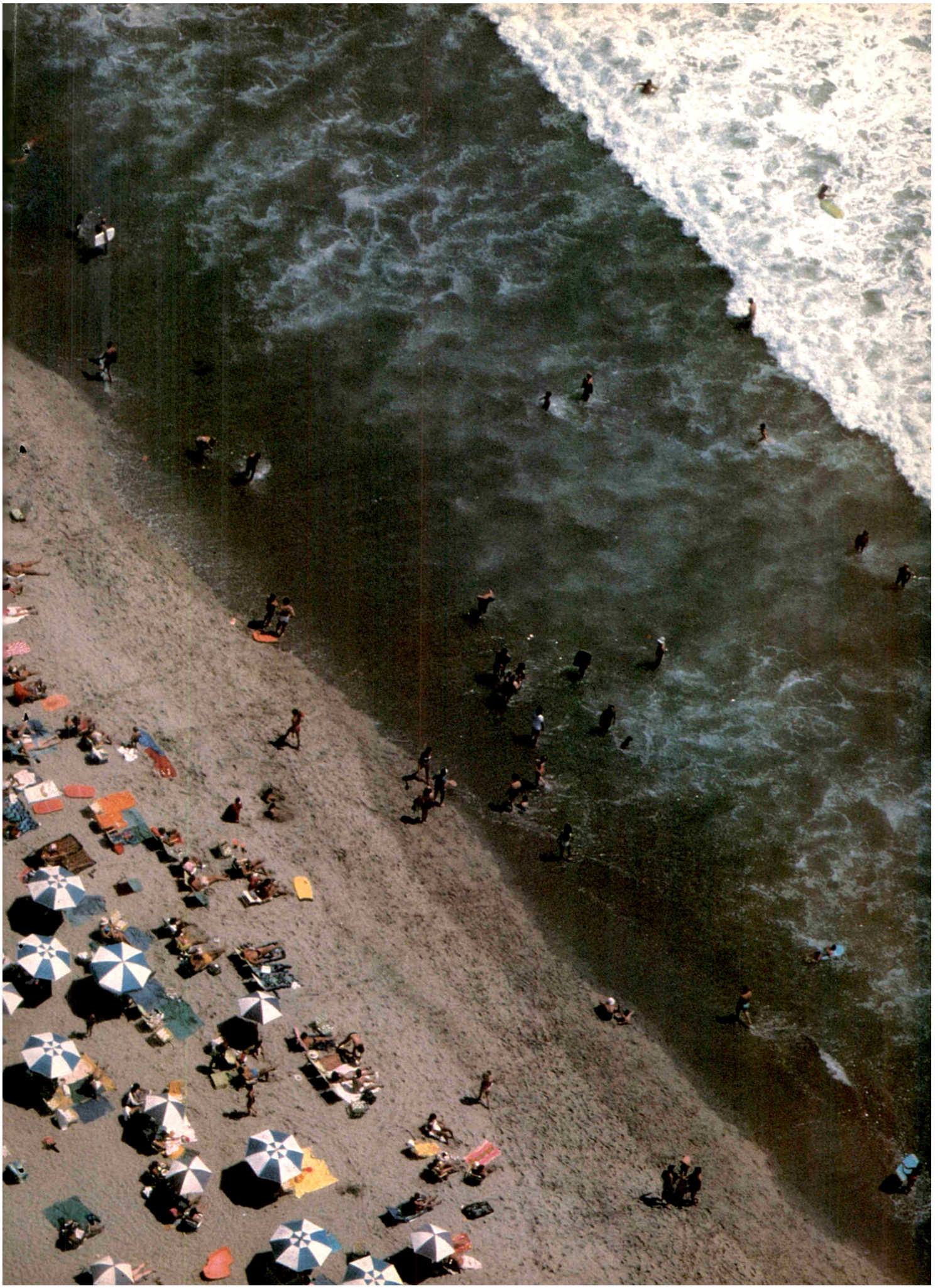


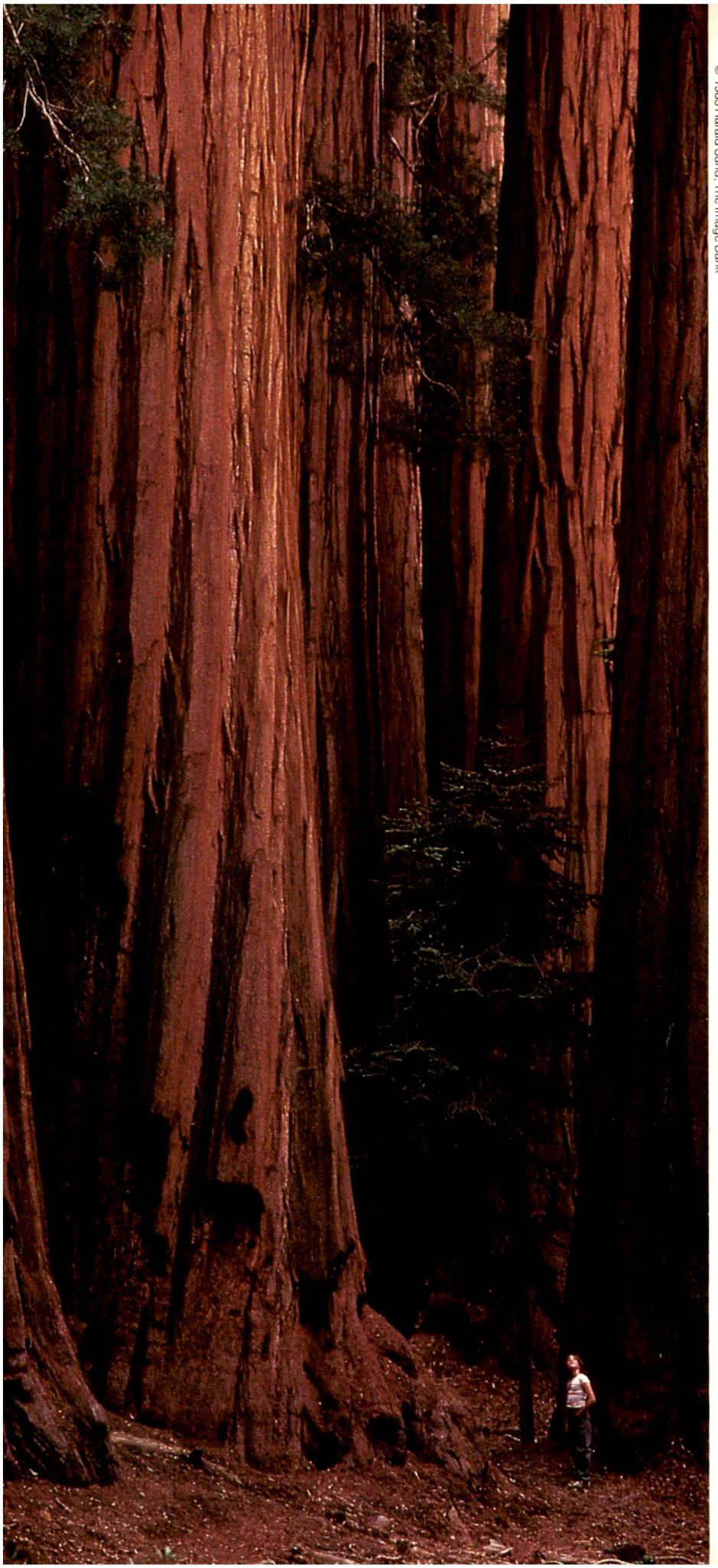
Sun and Sand

'Some claim the coast of California
Is seasonless, that there's no snow
To flavor winter. Others, born here
Or fleeing here—glad to forgo
The option of frostbitten fingers
And housebound months as hoarfrost lingers
Upon the firs, less picturesque
Than deadening, while from their desk
They'd stare past dark caves fringed with icicles
Well into March, and scarcely dare
To breathe the east or midwest air—
Now yield, with tank tops, frisbees, bicycles,
Dogs, cats, and kids and tans and smiles
To spring's precocious warmth and wiles.'

Vikram Seth, 1986

Playa Del Rey near Los Angeles.





© 1985 Harald Sund, The Image Bank

Redwoods

'Europe never had trees like the redwoods, whose life spans number over two thousand years. This forest is the idea of forest, a prototype drawn by God; no church columns attain that height, and never does a church's semi-darkness contrast so sharply with a ray slanting in from above the reach of sight. Small human figures are diminished not by the redwoods' trunks, too huge for comparisons, but by a lower level, in relation to ferns larger than a man and to the fallen, moss-covered logs which sprout new green shoots. To confirm their value as a forest symbol: the redwoods are such that the chunk of a felled tree does not die but regenerates itself in a multitude of swiftly growing sprigs.'

Czeslaw Milosz, 1982

Towering redwoods, the tallest trees on Earth, in Sequoia National Park.

THE LITERARY SENSIBILITY AT RINGSIDE

A critic surveys some classic and some contemporary literature about boxing.

By Arthur Krystal

Many writers of stature have been fascinated with the sport of boxing. Ernest Hemingway fancied himself talented in the ring after taking boxing lessons from the poet Ezra Pound and reflected this interest in some of his best-known fiction. His portrayal of fighters ranges from the preening Robert Cohn of The Sun Also Rises *to the passive Ole Andreson awaiting his own murder in the classic story "The Killers." Ralph Ellison's* Invisible Man *opens with a fierce slugfest, a "battle royal" in a hotel ballroom for the amusement of small-town leaders. And the contemporary novelist Joyce Carol Oates has recently published a philosophical meditation on the subject. Why does such a visceral and violent pastime appeal to some of the most cerebral minds? In this article critic Arthur Krystal surveys samples of prose in search of some answers. He concludes that the very contrast between boxing and literature—between the raw physical conflict of a fight and the inward struggle of a writer's life—explains in part why serious authors are so often at ringside.*

Arthur Krystal's reviews have appeared in The New York Times Book Review, The American Scholar *and* The New Criterion.

Tarzan knew how to box. When attacked by a great ape, he fell into a fighting stance, jabbed with his left, crossed with his right, thereby confusing and demoralizing his hairy opponent. No one taught Tarzan how to box; no one had to. English gentlemen, you see, are born with the knowledge. A preposterous conceit, certainly, though not one that would have surprised George Bernard Shaw, who scoffed that the upper-class Englishman, having undergone the manly rites of flogging and fighting at public schools, "gradually persuades himself that all Englishmen can use their fists." Shaw knew better and even wrote a novel about prizefighting in order "to detach it from the general elevation of moral character with which the ordinary novelist persists in associating it."

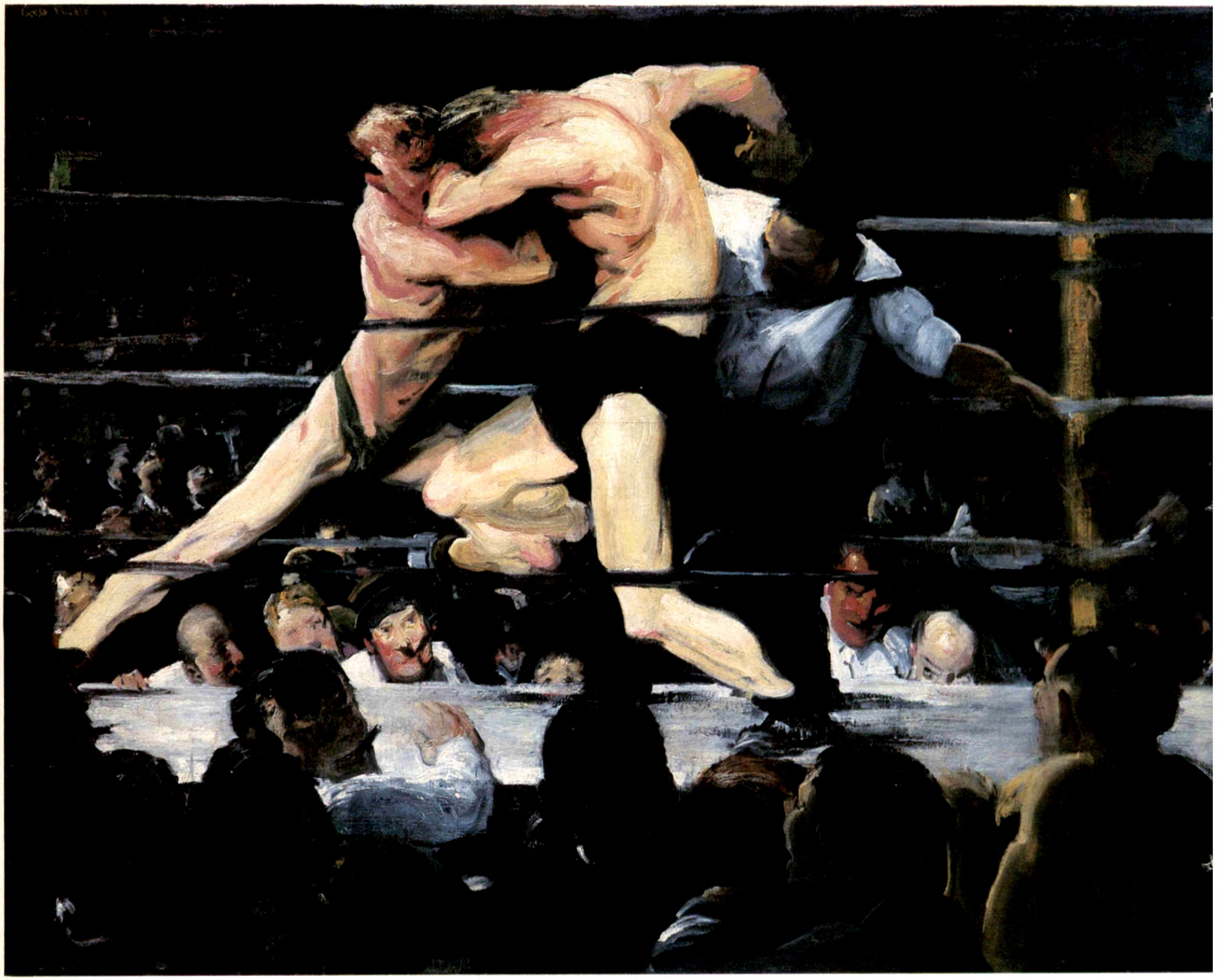
Apart from Charles Dickens, who, he claims, knew next to nothing about fighting, Shaw never identifies these novelists. But writers with apparently nothing in common have indeed been drawn to the sport. The earliest recorded bouts were, in fact, fictional, part of the funeral games recounted in the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*. After that, little is heard of the sport until James Figg declared himself the first English champion in 1719. "Professor" Figg demonstrated his prowess in a London amphitheater before the likes of Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift, and such was his celebrity that both his business card and portrait were done by William Hogarth.

One hundred years later, Lord Byron could be seen at ex-champion "Gentlemen" John Jackson's rooms, practicing "the noble art," and William Hazlitt at an 1821 fight. The international heavyweight championship match in 1860 found Dickens and William Thackeray among "the fancy" (that heterogeneous mob of toughs and swells that regularly attended prizefights). Arthur Conan Doyle wrote half a dozen "Tales of the Ring," and made sure that Sherlock Holmes was handy with his mitts. Among American writers, Jack London, Dashiell Hammett, Ernest Hemingway, Nelson Algren, James T. Farrell, Ring Lardner and Budd Schulberg have imagined the lives of boxers.

Actually, there *is* something these writers share—gender; a point that needs making only because a woman has finally thrown her hat into the ring. More significantly, Joyce Carol Oates's *On Boxing* is the first extended meditation on the subject for its own sake by a notable literary figure since Shaw's "Note on Modern Prizefighting," in 1901. Most recent commentaries on the sport have grown out of journalistic assignments, focusing on specific bouts or fighters. Oates's sex, then, is an issue only when she calls our attention to boxing's intrinsic masculinity. She approaches boxing as a longtime, interested observer, and, aptly enough, it's not the woman who seems at times misguided, but the writer.

The question is not why a woman has chosen to write about the sport, but why it appeals as much to the literary as to the nonliterary sensibility. Even boxing's most ardent detractors

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George Bellows, "Stag at Sharkey's," 1907

Oil on canvas, 92 cm x 122 cm
The Cleveland Museum of Art
Hinman B. Hurlbut Collection

Bellows and Boxing

Public boxing matches were illegal in New York City during the early 20th century. Fights could be staged only in small private clubs, such as "Sharkey's," across the street from the studio of the realist painter George Bellows. Since cameras at that time were not fast enough to capture the action in those dimly lit boxing clubs, Bellows's frank paintings of this sporting scene caused an immediate sensation. More than 60 years after his death, they form his chief artistic legacy. In "Stag at Sharkey's," his best-known work, the artist captures the fury of the boxing ring, perhaps a metaphor for the dynamic tensions of urban society at the turn of the century. Bellows was no apologist for the sport; his blood-splattered spectators are jeering grotesques materializing from the dark around the ring. Curiously, the fighters themselves seem faceless. "I do not care about the expression of a prizefighter's mug," the artist wrote the year after completing "Sharkey's." "A prizefighter's muscles are his e pluribus unum. The expression of his face is about as unimportant as the polish on a locomotive's headlight." Yet his paintings suggest that Bellows thought well of boxers themselves: his brawlers are titans of elemental force depicted in heroic stances.

concede its extraordinary hold on much of the American populace: no one sporting event—not the Super Bowl in football nor the final game of baseball's World Series—generates the anticipatory thrill of a big fight. The sport deserves its cicerone, a guide who feels its lure and understands both its real and imagined violence. Oates seems to fit the bill, and yet her book, while engaging when dealing with particular fights and fighters, fails in the end to explain boxing enthusiasts to themselves. The problem is one of misplaced emphasis. Oates puts boxing under a philosophical lens, increasing the magnification until the sport's borders, its defining edges, disappear. In her Sartre-influenced account:

> The boxer meets an opponent who is a dream-distortion of himself in the sense that his weaknesses, his capacity to fail and to be seriously hurt, his intellectual miscalculations—all can be interpreted as strengths belonging to the Other;the parameters of his private being are nothing less than boundless assertions of the Other's self.
>
> When a boxer is "knocked out" it does not mean...that he has been knocked unconscious, or even incapacitated; it means rather more poetically that he has been knocked out of Time. (The referee's dramatic count of ten constitutes a metaphysical parenthesis of a kind through which the fallen boxer must penetrate if he hopes to continue in Time.)

Boxing is evidently a more solemn business than any of us realized. Corroboration comes in the form of references to Aristotle, Spinoza and Nietzsche (even Kafka and Emily Dickinson, of all people, are worked in). But of all the luminaries Oates invokes, only the voice of D.H. Lawrence seems germane, as when she writes: "Of course, [boxing] is primitive, too, as birth, death and erotic love might be said to be primitive, and forces our reluctant acknowledgment that the most profound experiences of our lives are physical events...."

There is something to this, of course, but a drawback of gazing at the skull beneath the skin is that features in full view sometimes get overlooked. After all, much about prize-fighting is no less interesting for being obvious. In the recently published *The Manly Art*, University of Alabama professor Elliott J. Gorn states flatly that boxing "is *not* about instincts or male aggressiveness; it *is* about values, social relationships and culture." One can dispute the weight of the evidence Gorn brings forward, but not the historical forces themselves. Oates, on the other hand, cuts through history into myth, determined to see the "meta" in the physical: "It is the lost ancestral self that is sought, however futilely," when we watch a fight. One can't disprove this, but how, I wonder, does she know? Oates as fan is good reading, but Oates as oracle is—well, oracular. Either you believe or you start looking around for the nearest temple exit.

Oates's spiritual precursor in boxing literature is Norman Mailer, whose reportage of the Muhammad Ali-Joe Frazier [heavyweight championship] fight in 1971 ("Ego," published in *Life* magazine) and subsequent cogitations on the 1974 Ali-George Foreman match (*The Fight*) often read like morality plays. Like Oates, Mailer brings us news of boxing's hidden agenda. For Mailer, boxing is "the buried South Vietnam of America"; for Oates it is "America's tragic theater." Of course, Mailer also finds in boxing another reason to write about Mailer, and Oates ties up his obsessions rather neatly: "Mailer cannot establish a connection between himself and the boxers...he is forever excluded from what, unthinkingly, they represent ....And since the great champions of our time have been black, Mailer's preoccupation with masculinity is a preoccupation with blackness as well." Here Oates writes explicitly as a woman in recognizing both her and Mailer's exclusion from boxing's codified masculine world. And perhaps it is the woman as much as the writer who sees Mailer's celebration of Ali as a "lovesick lament."

The empathy Oates feels for Mailer is nowhere in evidence when she turns to A.J. Liebling's *The Sweet Science* (1956), a favorite among the fight game's literati. Oates criticizes Liebling for his "relentlessly jokey, condescending and occasionally racist attitude," and then partially exonerates him. Apparently, the exigencies of writing for *The New Yorker* required his articles to be "arch, broad in [their] humor, rather like situation comedy in which boxers are 'characters' depicted for our amusement."

Oates concedes hers is a minority opinion; so it ought to be, if only because it holds Liebling up as a typical *New Yorker* writer. Liebling did not write to amuse that magazine's "genteel, affluent readership"; he wrote about what amused him. To miss this is to misread everything of Liebling's.

An amateur boxer despite his bulk, an aficionado of the ring, a connoisseur of knockouts, Liebling adopted a deadpan, hyperbolic style that managed to be both respectful and waggish. Of one fighter's punches, he remarked: "They were of a force incommensurate with their purpose." The tail end of a bout elicits this description: "Both fighters looked tired, but [Archie] Moore looked mean-tired behind his whiskers, like Mephistopheles on a hot night." No one has written better about the goings-on and hangers-on at big or small fights, and few writers have matched Liebling's combination of boxing expertise and literary skill: "There was Moore, riding punches, picking them off, slipping them, rolling with them, ducking them....His face, emerging at instants from under the storm of arms—his own and Rocky's—looked like that of a swimming walrus."

One boxing writer who did mean to amuse is George Plimpton. In 1959, Plimpton went three rounds with Archie Moore and lived to write about it. *Shadow Box*, Plimpton's account of Muhammad Ali's journey from his Pennsylvania training camp to the fight with George Foreman in Zaire, is a droll and shrewd look at the personalities who make up the fight game. For Plimpton, boxing isn't life, it's about making a living, and his reportorial eye falls as often on Ali's

entourage as on the boss himself.

That different writers approach boxing from different perspectives is no great surprise, and perhaps it's not surprising that literary observers eventually describe the sport using an analogy to dialogue. Fights develop as a series of physical and psychic overtures, in which two debaters exchange attitudes, temperaments and philosophies, each determined to score a telling point.

All these scribes of the scuffle—Oates no less than the others—know what goes on inside the ropes. Even George Bernard Shaw, not a name that leaps to mind when one thinks of boxing, displays a hands-on knowledge of fisticuffs. His *Cashel Byron's Profession* is basically a novelistic exercise to get in a few digs at English institutions and English hypocrisy. And Shaw's descriptions of fighters of genius, whose reactions are "as instantaneous and unconscious as the calculation of the born arithmetician," and of formidable sluggers who can "take all the hammering that genius can give them" sound remarkably like Mailer's rhapsodic valuations of Ali and Frazier.

Of course, no literary demonstration of boxing's finer points can ignore its violence, and sensible apologists never shirk from it. A fight, after all, is two men trying to beat each other senseless, and it's precisely the violent confrontation wherein the drama unfolds. Oates alludes to this but in prose more appropriate to a scholarly journal: "In the brightly lit ring, man is *in extremis*, performing an atavistic rite or *agon* for the mysterious solace of those who can participate only vicariously in such drama: the drama of life in the flesh." Elsewhere in her book we read that "boxing in its greatest moments suggests the bloody fifth acts of classic tragedies, in which that mysterious element we call 'plot' achieves closure."

Maybe. But there are other, not so mysterious reasons that account for the drama.

Forgetting for the moment the principals involved, the very idea of prearranged personal combat embraces all contests where something greater than personal glory is at stake. In a sense, every main event harks back to David representing the Jews, and Goliath the Philistines; to Menelaus coming on the field for the Greeks, and Paris for the Trojans; to knights-errant sporting different colors. A prizefight is one nation or neighborhood putting up its best man against the champion of its rival or enemy. This is not to suggest that mythic significance attends every fight or that boxing is part of our archetypal memory; still, organized matches do have a historical dimension and are part of our folklore.

Liebling touches on this folkloric element when he reports being tapped on the noggin by Jack O'Brien, who had been hit by Bob Fitzsimmons, who had been hit by Jim Corbett, who had been hit by John L. Sullivan, until in the 1860s we reach the fist of Jem Mace, the first man acknowledged as heavyweight champion of the world. Muses Liebling: "It is a great thrill to feel that all that separates you from the early Victorians is a series of punches on the nose. I wonder if Professor Toynbee is as intimately attuned to his sources?"

While Liebling may have felt close to old-time fighters, I suspect that for most of us they have become the stuff of legend. Those bareknuckle fighters who went 50 and 60 rounds (though rounds were marked by falls, not by minutes) seem of heartier stock than today's 10- and 15-round contenders. Anyone who has read Nat Fleischer's *Pictorial History of Boxing* has surely come away thinking that there were giants on this earth once, some weighing only a little over 50 kilograms.

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Fame has always attached to victorious boxers. Even during the years when newspapers pointedly ignored popular, albeit illegal, bouts, doggerel and ballads bruited the fighters' names. Needless to say, the emerging middle class in America condemned boxing—a fact that hardly affected a fighter's reputation among the lower classes. In time, the genteel and well-to-do, emulating earlier generations of British aristocracy, came to regard boxing as a manly endeavor, good for both body and soul. One of the founders of the Boy Scouts of America, Ernest Thompson Seton, took heart that he had never met a boy who would not rather be John L. Sullivan than Leo Tolstoy. Another Ernest, Hemingway of course, wanted to be both.

Most fights, if truth be told, are dull affairs. The greater excitement is in the stands. Ethnic antagonisms, racial pride and chauvinistic hysteria often make the violence inside the ropes tame by comparison. But every so often, two men arise with differently proportioned bodies and differently cast minds, representing different constituencies, who capture the attention of people not normally disposed to view a fight. Such studies in contrast—Jack Dempsey vs. Georges Carpentier in the 1920s, Roberto Durán vs. Sugar Ray Leonard, Marvin Hagler vs. Thomas Hearns—resurrect grave pugilistic questions: will the experienced man withstand the onslaught of the young challenger? Will the consummate boxer defeat the relentless slugger? Can finesse sidestep brute force?

If I may be allowed an Oatesean leap: perhaps each battler embodies the interested spectator's own hopes of how the world works. Is it mindless strength and energy that govern nature, or do acquired skills and ele-

gance count for something? In such contests, the drama doesn't lie in the possibility of a knockout but in the transaction itself. The distinction is important. For while bloodlust undoubtedly shows up at fights, it is really an intense curiosity that draws most people, a desire to witness the fight's unfolding and to be on hand at its resolution.

In addition, there is something refreshingly open about boxing's display of aggression. What is a fair fight but meritocracy in action? In the roped-off arena, education, social status, nepotism and chicanery are of no avail; a man is forced to rely on nothing but his own body. Knowing this, the spectator fully expects that the better man will prevail. And perhaps because in life it isn't always the man with more ability who gets ahead, we take satisfaction in a fighter's victory.

More immediately, fighters elicit admiration by throwing into relief our own physical limitations. Writers are no exception here. The imperious Shaw gushed like a schoolboy on first meeting Georges Carpentier, the European light-heavyweight champion famous for his build and Gallic good looks. Writers are fans in the way that other people are fans, swayed by personal loyalties and patriotic feeling. Argentinian writer Julio Cortázar recalled that the happiest moment of his youth came in 1923 when countryman Luis Firpo knocked Dempsey out of the ring, and the saddest moment when Dempsey was pushed back in.

If it sometimes seems that writers have a special affinity for boxers, it's simply because they are in a position to publicize their thoughts; any resemblance between the two professions is purely an act of the willful imagination. The solitude of each, the putting it all on the line, the naked display of ego and other such phrases seeking to connect the writer's lot with that of the boxer are more wistful than realistic assessments of their respective operations. Indeed, it is precisely the writer's awareness of the unbridgeable gulf between these professions that prompts such comparisons.

The writer's insights into the boxer's psyche stem from his own ambivalence concerning the inwardness and separateness of writing. For while the boxer's life turns upon action, upon a visible struggle, the writer derives his identity from the private act of writing and the secret gathering of material. In a true sense, the writer's life is lived in order to be written about. To the mental worker, then, the boxer's time in the ring is an expression of life as raw, nonreductive experience, of an enviable unself-conscious existence where moments are not appraised for their possible transmutation into art.

To the writer, the boxer's time in the ring is an expression of life as raw, nonreductive experience, of an enviable unself-conscious existence where moments are not appraised for their possible transmutation into art.

Such unreflective action may therefore seem more real, more vital, than the introspective, ultimately inconclusive act of writing (as if too much awareness of living were an obstacle to living completely). Even allowing for machismo, there is something fundamentally serious in this perceived deprivation. More than a lost opportunity to demonstrate physical courage, a life divorced from the rough and tumble of ordinary experience is a failure of experience. "Every man thinks meanly of himself for not having been a soldier, or not having been at sea," observed Samuel Johnson, himself an advocate of the prize ring.

This rather sweeping generalization is probably true for many men and many writers, but it is also probably true that not everyone is haunted by such regrets. Dr. Johnson's dictum certainly applies to some writers; for instance, to Johnson. Why else would his mistress have noticed that "no praise ever went so close to his heart as when Mr. Hamilton called out one day upon Brighthelmstone Downs, 'Why, Johnson rides as well, for aught I see, as the most illiterate fellow in England.' "

Not so amusing is the tendency of writers to see themselves in a pugilistic light, hoping perhaps that the uncomplicated esteem granted to athletes will revert to them. Hemingway felt that the crown once worn by Tolstoy belonged to him, and Mailer liked to call himself the champ of writers. Mailer, in fact, so yearned to join the boxing fraternity that he once cavorted with light-heavyweight champion José Torres on a television talk show.

Of course, no amount of literary palaver will appease boxing's critics or transform the sport into a vocation like any other. It's not. It's a brutal business, and if a valid defense exists we must look to the boxers themselves, not because disenfranchised young men benefit from boxing (few actually do) but because once in the professional ranks they deal in a level of violence incomprehensible to outsiders. The violence they mete out is not only harsher than civilians fathom; it is also accommodated in certain unfathomable ways. A fighter is his body, and it is as a body that he expresses himself. At the same time, he is also curiously detached from it: a body is something to be used like a tool, or worn like armor. In short, his sense of himself is what enables him to do—and protects him from—violence.

But however routine such violence becomes to the professional, a fight is still a nasty bit of work. It is not, as some writers like to claim, an esthetic enactment, erotic dance, savage ceremony or chess match; it's not even a dialogue except in the limited sense that an exchange occurs between two individuals. A fight is a fight, though in the more interesting ones a man's skill, courage and grace can make us momentarily forget the end to which they are being put. ♦

DO CORPORATIONS HAVE POLITICAL POWER?

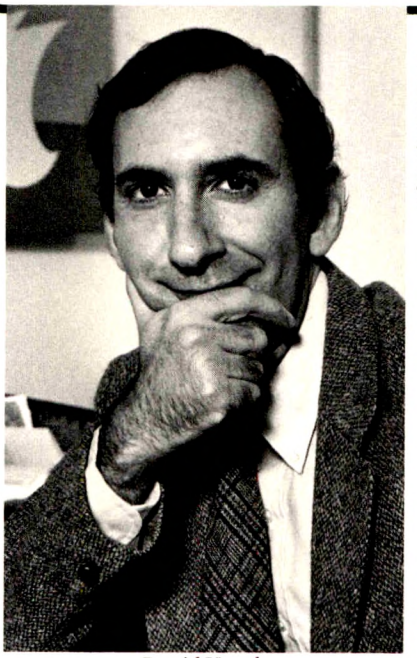
By David Vogel

Yes, says the author, but not the dominant influence some political scientists claim.

As American business boomed after World War II, many economists and political scientists viewed large corporations as the principal players in the nation's power structure. To economist John Kenneth Galbraith the influence enjoyed by a "captain of industry" was a direct corollary of the size of the company. In American Capitalism *(1956), he wrote: "With size goes the ultimate responsibility for the decisions affecting the largest number of employees, over prices that affect the largest number of customers, over investment policies which work the greatest change in the income, livelihood or landscape of the community."*

Is this view of big business still tenable? Do corporations hold a disproportionate share of economic and political power? Public-policy professor David Vogel disagrees that corporate leaders enjoy a "privileged position" with superior access to government officials. He also points out that corporations, while hierarchical organizations, are accountable to others, primarily consumers and stockholders. Vogel places businesses squarely in the tradition of American pluralism. They compete fairly in the political marketplace with other interest groups—and, in fact, with other industries and companies—for favorable government policies.

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David Vogel

The amount of political power exercised by business has been the subject of considerable debate among political scientists. Their views have fallen roughly into two camps. One perspective views business primarily as an interest group, actively competing with a plurality of other political constituencies to both define the political agenda and influence specific public policies. In the political marketplace, business is not regarded as enjoying any particular advantages that cannot be matched by other interest groups. As a result, its power varies depending on such factors as the climate of public opinion, the performance of the economy, the political skills and resources of particular companies or industries, and the relative strength of other interest groups. This perspective is commonly identified with pluralism. Another approach regards business not as another interest group but as a kind of private government, which enjoys a privileged position in American politics. The ability of business to define the terms of public debate and its superior access to government officials are seen as overshadowing any other political constituency, thus making a mockery of a pluralist democracy.

The study of American politics was dominated by pluralists from the early 1940s through the late '60s. They documented the inability of any one interest group, including business, to dominate the American political system. Over the last two decades, however, the pluralist view of American politics has been increasingly challenged. Since 1970, a steady stream of papers and textbooks has been published, arguing that American democracy is fundamentally flawed, largely on the ground that business exercises disproportionate political and social power. Significantly, two of the discipline's most prominent pluralists—Yale University political scientists Robert Dahl and Charles

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Lindblom—have publicly repudiated their earlier position. In a 1976 book they confessed that

> in our discussion of pluralism we made another error—and it is a continuing error in social science—in regarding business groups as playing the same interest-group role as other groups in polyarchal systems, though more powerfully. Businessmen play a distinctive role in polyarchal politics that is qualitatively different from that of any interest group. It is also much more powerful than an interest-group role.

The arguments of those who view business as a threat to American pluralist political democracy fall into three broad categories. One perspective argues that the largely privately owned business corporation undermines American democracy because its internal structure of authority is undemocratic. A second set of arguments insists that American pluralist democracy is flawed because business occupies a "privileged position." A third perspective incorporates the insights of the first two, but goes a step further in conceiving of the business system itself as a system of power, depriving the majority of either wealth or influence.

Robert Dahl is the most prominent advocate of the first perspective. He argues that corporations are essentially political systems, whose leaders exercise great power, influence and control over employees, consumers, suppliers and (at least) local economies.

Dahl finds it disturbing that a substantial proportion of the citizenry "live out their working lives, and most of their daily existence, not within a democratic system but instead within a hierarchical structure of subordination." His solution is to extend the criteria of procedural democracy to the government of firms, essentially through some form of worker self-management.

Dahl's contention that the decisions made by privately owned corporations are profoundly public or social in character is not controversial. The doctrine of corporate social responsibility, first articulated in the United States at the turn of the century, and echoed by each generation of executives, explicitly recognizes that corporations have ceased to be private institutions. The undermining of the concept of limited government in American politics has meant that everything the corporation does is now, in principle, the public's business. Even contemporary conservative criticisms of government regulation of business rest primarily on pragmatic grounds, not ideological ones.

Dahl's contention that "neither in theory nor in practice are corporate governments democratic" is also unexceptional. Yet this does not make the corporation unique: virtually all nongovernment institutions can be described in similar terms. Universities, foundations, labor unions, many professional and trade associations, religious institutions and organizations, charitable organizations—even public-interest groups—all exercise political power, and yet none is governed according to democratic principles or precepts.

In fact, given Dahl's criteria for democracy, namely that an institution is nondemocratic unless those who work for it are able to hold those who govern it accountable, the American government itself is not run according to democratic principles. After all, government employees do not choose their superiors. Nor are they formally consulted about the most important decisions taken by the departments or bureaucracies in which they work. But no one considers the structure of the military a threat to democracy because soldiers are not allowed to set military policy.

Dahl does acknowledge that the corporation is one among a large number of institutions that exercise authority in U.S. society. But he only wishes to reform the internal structure of authority of one of them, namely, the "privately owned and controlled economic enterprise." He never explains, however, the basis for this distinction. Why, if U.S. society is to be made more democratic, is it essential that General Motors be governed by its employees, but not the Catholic Church, Yale University or the Ford Foundation?

Is it not significant that not one single institution in society—whether public or private, profit-seeking or charitable—is governed by those who work for it? Instead, each is controlled by some other group of individuals—stockholders and consumers in the case of business, citizens in the case of government, their membership or senior staff in the case of voluntary organizations, faculty in the case of universities, trustees in the case of foundations—precisely because their accountability to these constituencies is central to the fundamental purposes for which they were established. The issue is not whether corporations should be accountable. The question is accountable to whom?

Charles Lindblom is primarily responsible for introducing another view of the place of business in American democracy. He argues that the probusiness slant of public policy is not merely the result of business' superior economic and political resources, but rather that business enjoys a privileged position in a capitalist system because of its unique relationship to the public welfare. This relationship sets it apart from other interests that compete for influence on public policy. Corporate leaders hold a privileged position because, according to Lindblom, society has placed in their hands the responsibility for mobilizing and organizing its economic resources. In this capacity, corporate executives "decide a nation's industrial technology, the pattern of work organization, location of industry, market structure, resource allocation and, of course, executive compensation status." Lindblom contends that these broad categories of major decisions have been removed from the political agenda and thus from democratic control. To compound the problem, constitutional rules, especially those protecting private-property rights, prevent public control over corporate decision making from being exercised directly.

The essence of Lindblom's argument is that businessmen are uniquely powerful because the government relies upon them to organize the nation's production and distribution of wealth. But while this makes the gov-

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ernment dependent on the decisions of businessmen, it also makes business at least as dependent on the decisions of government. In the real world, neither business nor government gets all it wants from the other: government officials are usually dissatisfied with the economy's rate of growth, while businessmen invariably argue that their profits would be higher if the government were more responsive to their needs.

It is not obvious whose leverage is greater. A lack of business confidence can lead to unemployment, which frequently, though not always, hurts elected officials. But, by the same token, various government policies—such as inflating the currency, refusing requests for protectionism, increasing taxes or imposing costly environmental controls—can also reduce the wealth of businessmen. Nor is the threat on the part of businessmen to withhold additional investment unless their demands are met as powerful as Lindblom portrays it. For one, its power is fundamentally limited by the fact that it cannot be employed without also hurting the capitalists themselves.

A nation's rate of economic growth is affected by the decisions of a multiplicity of individuals and institutions, not just those of businessmen. It is true that if businessmen invest less, there will be less economic growth and therefore more unemployment. But companies can dramatically increase their rate of investment and still the economy will stagnate—as long as consumers are not interested in purchasing the products the companies offer.

The ability of companies to influence public policies is also constrained by the business cycle itself. When the economy collapses—as it did during the early 1930s—it becomes rather difficult for companies to insist on the importance of investor confidence. The fact that business was generally blamed for the Great Depression significantly weakened its ability to "veto" new government initiatives. It was rather awkward for companies to threaten to increase unemployment when 25 percent of the work force was already unemployed. On a lesser scale, a similar development took place during the mid-1970s. Having been blamed for causing the "energy crisis," the oil industry was scarcely in a position to demand additional concessions.

On the other hand, when the economy is performing relatively well, politicians are less likely to take seriously corporate complaints about the costs of government intervention. Controls on business tend to be increased when the economy is doing poorly and when it is doing very well. It is when economic performance lies somewhere in between—as has been the case over the last decade—that politicians become more willing to defer to the needs of business.

Lindblom's analysis of corporate power also tends to reify "business." Even though the government has to provide inducements to business to enable the economy to grow, it does not follow that it has to provide inducements to any particular company or industry. After all, segments of the economy can perform poorly even when the economy as a whole is doing relatively well; the reverse is also true. The government can—and in fact does—discriminate among businesses. Government spending, tax, trade, industrial and regulatory policies invariably favor particular sectors, industries, regions, products and even some plants over others. (Indeed, competing to increase their share of benefits from government is among the most important corporate political activities.) This in turn gives government an important source of leverage over business: it can play different segments of business against each other.

In fact, if governments were actually responsive to even a significant proportion of political demands made by existing companies, the economy would stagnate. There would be no bankruptcies, no imports that competed with domestic producers, no declining industries or regions, no reductions in existing tax breaks or subsidies, no changes in government procurement or spending policies. This state of affairs more accurately characterizes state-socialist societies than capitalist ones; it certainly does not accurately describe the contemporary American political economy. One can, of course, cite numerous public policies whose purpose is to conserve the economic status quo. But these must be placed alongside the economic deregulation of airlines, railroads, trucking and telecommunications, the Reagan Administration's resistance to demands for increased protectionism, and the most recent tax-reform bill. Each of these policies—deregulation, free trade and tax reform—has or will undermine the profitability of countless firms and industries, while presumably strengthening the overall performance of the economy. If politicians wish to encourage economic growth, they would be well advised to ignore rather than defer to what most business lobbyists want.

If one surveys the public policies of the democratic-capitalist nations in the postwar period, one is struck not

by how narrowly constrained they have been by the imperatives of a privately owned economy, but how varied they have been. Capitalist economies have prospered with virtually no government ownership of the means of production and with an extremely large public sector, with market-based capital markets and with politically directed ones, with weak labor unions and with strong ones, with virtually no environmental-protection laws and with strict ones, with generous welfare states and with limited ones, with regressive tax policies and progressive ones. And, of course, capitalist economies have done poorly under all these varied public policies as well. In short, the relationship between any set of policies and economic growth or corporate profitability is by no means as clear-cut as Lindblom implies.

Even if politicians are persuaded by businessmen that a particular set of policies is necessary to increase economic growth, they can still refuse to enact them. Democratic governments can and do choose to accept lower growth rates in order to achieve other public-policy objectives. There are literally hundreds of policy changes the American government could enact that would likely increase the rate of corporate investment—and thus presumably enhance corporate profits, improve economic growth rates and reduce unemployment. But influential segments of the American public are not interested in making the tradeoffs that such decisions would entail. The rate of return to capital does not constitute a fixed point in the social universe around which politicians must structure their economic and social policies. On the contrary, the governments of democratic societies exercise considerable discretion in determining how they wish to allocate their nation's limited resources.

It is not simply businessmen who warn that unless they are given additional resources, dire consequences will follow. The head of every single governmental agency and nonprofit institution makes the identical argument. Thus, educators claim that unless they are given more funds, the next generation of Americans will be inadequately educated. Their threats are no more—or no less—credible than those of business executives.

Lindblom argues that an important source of the unique power of businesses is that they must be induced rather than commanded to perform the "many organizational and leadership tasks that are delegated to them." But, again, how does that make businessmen unique? American society relies upon a system of inducements to perform an infinite variety of tasks. The electoral system itself functions by inducing politicians, largely in the form of offering them the prospect of being elected or reelected. Contrary to Lindblom's assertion that "government officials ...[are] directed and controlled through a system of commands," politicians, in turn, must provide inducements to various public agencies, largely in the form of allocating resources to them. Otherwise, government officials might not assist political leaders in carrying out their electoral promises. Similarly, government agencies cannot command citizens to work for them: they must offer inducements in the form of wages and other benefits. Indeed, since the abolition of the draft, even the military must induce rather than command a proportion of the population to serve in the armed forces.

A distinguishing characteristic of democratic governments is precisely that they issue relatively few commands to their citizens. Democratic governments generally do not command businessmen to produce goods and services. And they do not issue commands to workers, telling them where to live or what occupation to follow either. In short, there is nothing atypical about the relationship between business and government. Democratic governments treat businessmen no differently than they treat anyone else.

Of course, democratic governments do not rely exclusively upon inducements, any more than the state-socialist societies rely exclusively upon commands. Democratic governments also enact innumerable laws and regulations that impose constraints on the behavior of both individuals and institutions. A disproportionate number of these rules and regulations affect the conduct of businessmen. The government commands companies to pay a share of their profits in taxes, to treat women and minorities fairly, not to export particular products to various countries, to disclose their financial status to prospective investors, not to pay their workers less than a specified wage and to install various safety equipment in their machinery. Through its control over land-use, the government forbids companies from locating in specified areas, and through the power of eminent domain, it expropriates private property for public purposes. For some sectors of the economy, the government tells businessmen how much to produce, and for other sectors what services it must provide to customers and at what cost.

Some political scientists who study the political power of business have focused on the business system itself as a structure of power. This perspective owes much to Marxism, but it is also reflected in the writings of political economists such as John Kenneth Galbraith. The literature in this genre depicts a "corporate state," dominated by a relatively small number of giant corporations, each of whose managers has achieved a substantial degree of freedom from the restraints imposed by the marketplace.

Until 15 years ago, this vision was, in many respects, an accurate one. American companies were governed by what was essentially a self-perpetuating elite, with "stockholder democracy" amounting to nothing more than a legal fiction. Nor were large companies vulnerable to the pressures of marketplace competition: companies rarely competed on price, and consumer tastes and preferences were both stable and relatively predictable. Moreover, the fruits of technological innovation were usually captured by existing firms. As a result, with only a handful of exceptions, both the industries and the individual companies that dominated the American economic system during the 1920s continued to dominate it throughout the '60s. And thanks to the steady, and relatively uninterrupted, growth of the economy in the quarter-century following World War II, large companies, regardless of how well or poorly they were managed, were invariably profitable.

Developments in American business since the early 1970s include:

- The managerial revolution has been followed by a counterrevolution of stockholders, inspired by investment bankers and supported by institutional investors. Now virtually every American corporation is vulnerable to a hostile takeover, many of which are initiated and backed by investors from well outside the "business establishment."
- Economic conditions are increasingly unpredictable and unstable. Since the early 1970s Americans have witnessed two major recessions, a prolonged period of inflation as well as both a major increase and then an equally unexpected decrease in the price of agricultural products and raw materials, most notably energy. Each of these developments has wreaked havoc on corporate balance sheets; large corporations no longer automatically make money.
- The deregulation of financial markets, airlines, railroads and trucking has forced a substantial segment of the American business community to engage in actual price competition for the first time in decades. The market share of companies in each of these industries now changes constantly and a number of firms have either been forced to merge or become bankrupt.
- The northeast quadrant of the United States, which dominated American manufacturing and finance for more than a century, has lost a significant share of its wealth and power to the Sunbelt.
- The United States is in the midst of an entrepreneurial revolution. Since 1980, new businesses have been formed at the rate of approximately 500,000 a year. Many of these firms are in industries that did not exist a decade ago, while others have successfully challenged the market positions of established companies. As a result, virtually no American companies—even the very largest—remain unthreatened by marketplace competition.
- American industry has become vulnerable to foreign competition. Approximately 70 percent of the products manufactured in the United States now face competition from imports—up from 20 percent 15 years ago. The increase in the extent of international trade among the established industrial nations, coupled with the aggressive export strategies of the newly industrializing nations—primarily from the Pacific—has meant that the world marketplace is much more competitive than at any time in recent history.
- Finally, the control and ownership of capital within the world economy have begun to change significantly. The historic dominance of the global economy by Western Europe and the United States has been steadily eroding. The world's economic center of gravity is moving from nations bordering the Atlantic Ocean—where it has been for nearly 500 years—to the Pacific.

Each of these developments challenges the notion that business constitutes a stable system of power; on the contrary, those who currently control capital cannot be assured of maintaining their wealth or power.

Of all these developments, among the most important is the changing role of the large business corporation. The "business as a system of power" perspective assumes that the large corporation is the prototypical form of capitalist enterprise. But is it? There is growing evidence suggesting that the large business corporation is becoming an increasingly *less* important form of wealth creation in advanced capitalist societies. Each year a smaller proportion of Americans work for large firms; virtually all of the recent growth in private-sector employment in the American economy has taken place in smaller companies. More importantly, many of the most dynamic and innovative sectors of the American economy tend not to be dominated by large companies; this is particularly true of the rapidly growing service sector. If these trends continue—and many students of management believe that they are even likely to accelerate—then one of the central assumptions of critics of corporate power may no longer be valid.

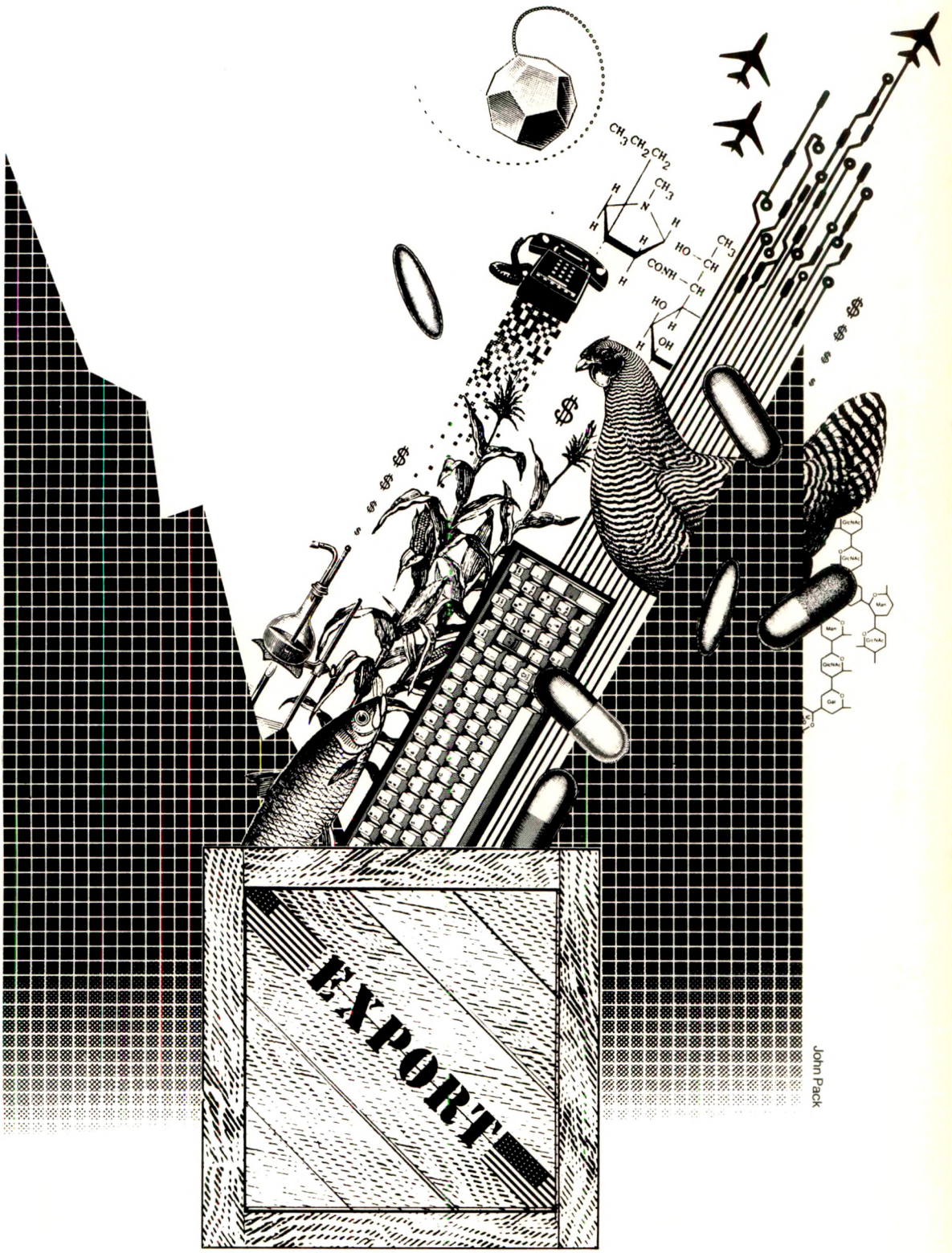
Clearly businessmen exercise political power. But that is hardly the issue. In a democratic society, *all* citizens, in principle, have the opportunity to exercise power. The issue is: do businessmen wield power out of proportion to their numerical representation in society? Given that a significant portion of Americans either own or manage business, it is by no means clear that they do. Moreover businessmen are not in a position to influence equally all kinds of decisions. Their opinion, for example, as to whether or not abortions should be legal carries no more weight than that of any other group of citizens. On the other hand, they might well be able to affect disproportionately tax or regulatory policies.

Just how successful is business in getting what it wants from government and how does its influence vary from industry to industry, from issue to issue, and over time? During the 1960s and '70s business found its power and influence effectively challenged by other political constituencies, most notably the public-interest groups. There is nothing about the nature of power exercised by business that cannot be accounted for within the framework of interest-group politics. Nor is the challenge posed to democratic thought or practice by the large corporation any different from that of any other large bureaucracy—whether private or public. We need not abandon pluralism in order to understand the political power of business in capitalist democracies. ♦

A NEW COMPETITIVENESS

American prospects in world trade look brighter today than they have in more than two decades.

By Sylvia Nasar



John Pack

Some observers point to the large trade deficits of recent years as evidence that competitiveness in international commerce is one of the weaker aspects of the U.S. economy. Yet, as economic journalist Sylvia Nasar explains, the current trade imbalance masks long-term improvements in manufacturing and industrial health. U.S. workers continue to be the world's most productive, for example, and the share that American-based multinational companies have in world exports has held steady over the years at 17 percent. Contrary to popular opinion, manufacturers in the 1980s have invested considerable sums in research and development, a strategy which is beginning to pay dividends as American telecommunications, aircraft, chemical and other high-tech firms are capturing extensive export markets. As the author concludes, "unless business suddenly backs away from all that it is doing, its competitive prospects look brighter than they have since the 1960s."

Sylvia Nasar is an associate editor of Fortune *magazine.*

Competitiveness has become the trendiest worry around. The schemes floating through Washington to restore U.S. industrial prowess are more numerous than the Toyotas on local highways. Depending on who's talking, the problem is unfair trading practices by other nations or second-rate American management. The proof is in America's withering industrial base, and the solutions range from handouts for "strategic" industries to raw protectionism.

Such perceptions mix a few grains of fact with a heap of fallacies. The United States does indeed need to be more competitive internationally. Over the next decade it has no choice but to sell more goods and services abroad to deal with its immense foreign debt. If that debt levels off at $500,000 million, the United States would have to run a trade surplus of $30,000 million a year—a shift of $200,000 million—just to pay interest.

How the United States narrows its trade gap is critical to its future. Most of the burden will fall on manufacturing. Though services account for 55 percent of U.S. output, those such as travel, shipping, construction and insurance are less than one-twentieth the size of U.S. merchandise exports. The dollar's fall relative to the currencies of other nations has already helped. But if the United States relies only on continuing devaluations to make its goods more competitive, it will eventually become another declining industrial power, exporting cheap labor at the expense of living standards. The only alternative is good old-fashioned industrial competitiveness: making better products more efficiently and selling them aggressively.

What most competitiveness rhetoric ignores is that while U.S. manufacturing has taken a beating in recent years, it is alive and getting better. Manufacturing output as a share of gross national product (GNP) in 1986 was 22 percent, virtually unchanged from its level of 1969. Industrial production has advanced as strongly in the current recovery as during past cycles, and has risen faster in the United States than in most other countries during the 1980s. The shocks of the decade's early years have prodded manufacturers into making epochal changes—boosting productivity, raising product quality, cutting costs, restructuring management. Given continuing improvement, along with another 15 to 20 percent decline in the dollar, there is no reason why U.S. industry cannot compete globally.

A MORE ACCURATE YARDSTICK

Arguments about U.S. competitiveness seem to reflect the assumption that since the problem has been recently discovered, it must be a recent development. In fact, competitiveness began to flag over a decade ago; it is only recently that the consequences became apparent. The trend shows most clearly in a new market-share index developed by Paul Krugman, an international economist at MIT, and George Hatsopoulos, chairman of a Massachusetts producer of high-tech instruments. The measure compares actual U.S. sales of manufactured products at home and abroad with what those sales would have been if the U.S. share in each market had remained the same as in 1980.

The index shows that the U.S. share of the world market was fairly stable during the 1970s but then plunged in the early '80s. The size of the decline meant that manufacturing output was about nine percent lower in 1986 than if the United States had been able to keep its 1980

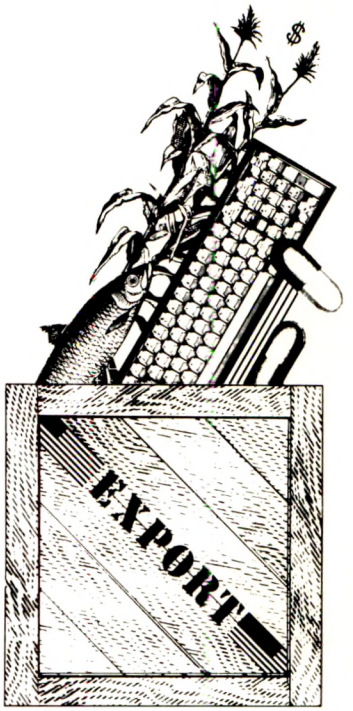
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share. The pattern suggests that the loss of competitiveness was dramatic and sudden, and some economists argue that the 50 percent rise in the real value of the dollar between 1980 and 1985 alone was to blame. But as Krugman and Hatsopoulos argue, that is not the case.

During the 1970s, imports were grabbing a bigger share of the U.S. domestic market—especially in steel, clothing, textiles and cars. The losses were offset by a growing share of overseas markets, which the United States won by making its labor and goods ever cheaper relative to its competitors'. Those gains were achieved with devaluation: as the dollar dropped at an average rate of 2.5 percent a year, unit labor costs fell 40 percent against those of trading partners. But the strong dollar of the early 1980s brought a reversal. Relative unit labor costs soared, and a surge of imports depressed U.S. manufacturers' share of the domestic market while export sales flattened out. Not until the dollar started its fall in early 1985 did relative unit labor costs head down again. Today U.S. industry's unit labor costs are about where they were in 1980 compared with those of its overseas rivals, and heading lower.

Confusion over competitiveness is compounded by the yardsticks commonly used to measure it. Take the trade deficit, a record $170,000 million in 1986, often cited as evidence of America's declining ability to compete. But trade was mostly in balance during the 1970s, when U.S. competitiveness was beginning to falter, and the current trade performance masks fundamental improvements in industrial health.

Trade accounts are as likely to reflect changes in spending and borrowing patterns as underlying changes in a country's ability to compete. A country may amass a surplus even though its competitiveness is going down the drain; for example, investment has fallen sharply in Latin



American debtor nations even as their export earnings have soared. The U.S. trade deficit is chiefly due to a strong dollar, the collapse of demand in Latin America—formerly a strong market for U.S. goods—and faster growth in the United States than abroad.

Shrinking manufacturing employment, another often-cited indication that the United States is losing its muscle, also is misleading. Such declines actually signal rising productivity. Britain has a larger share of its work force in manufacturing than most industrialized countries, yet its industrial production is no higher now than it was in 1970.

VIGOROUS MULTINATIONALS

Because U.S. manufacturers are now more efficient and aggressive, they are in much better shape to compete than they were a few years ago. One clue to America's industrial vigor is the record of its multinationals, which include the top companies in most industries. In a 1986 study by the National Bureau of Economic Research, Robert E. Lipsey and Irving B. Kravis showed that these companies have been exceedingly successful exporters over the past several decades, supplying the world with one-quarter of its chemicals and machinery, and nearly one-tenth of its processed food, among other goods. The Japanese buy IBM computers, the Germans buy Fords, the French buy Pfizer antibiotics—but these American labels are manufactured outside the United States. According to Kenichi Ohmae, managing director of the Tokyo branch of the business-consulting firm McKinsey & Co., U.S. companies in Japan produced more than $53,000 million in goods and services in 1985—some $7,000 million more than that year's American trade deficit with Japan. Lipsey and Kravis note that while the U.S. share of world exports has fallen by nearly half in the past three decades, U.S. multinationals' share of world exports held steady at around 17 percent.

American-based manufacturers now appear to be emerging from the toils of cost cutting and restructuring with strengths more akin to those of the multinationals. The export share of manufacturers, which declined steadily during the 1970s, has leveled off in the '80s. The dollar share held steady at roughly 20 percent of world exports between 1981 and 1985; the volume share flattened out as well, at about 11 percent.

U.S. exports have become increasingly concentrated in areas where American producers have a comparative advantage and where world demand promises to grow quickly: aircraft, instruments, specialty chemicals, telecommunications equipment, computers, semiconductors, drugs and biological products. The high-tech share of American exports rose from 34 to 42 percent during the 1980s.

Some American companies are finding they can compete even in areas where the Japanese are regarded as invulnerable low-cost producers. Tektronix, based in Oregon, is the world leader in several kinds of sophisticated measuring devices used to

design and service computers, exporting 40 percent of its production. In a series of steps that are becoming familiar to more and more American managers in an effort to compete against Japanese goods, the company computerized its manufacturing operations, boosted inventory turnover with a just-in-time system, gave factory workers more control over production, cut product defects and improved services to customers. The result: manufacturing costs fell from 52.4 percent of sales in 1983 to 45.9 percent in 1987. Tektronix met the Japanese prices despite the rise in the dollar's value during most of this period, and kept its market share.

Although economic growth has been moderate over the past several years, the United States has invested heavily in refurbishing plants and, equally important, has shifted resources out of older industries into newer ones. For example, as steel capacity fell 15 percent, capacity in the instruments industry soared nearly 25 percent. Though factory utilization has remained low, manufacturers have boosted capacity by about one-fourth so far in the 1980s, partly as a result of an investment boom in 1984 and 1985. Manufacturers have not just been throwing money at their problems. The massive corporate restructuring wave, which has eliminated decades of sloppy practices and bureaucratic padding, has helped boost the rate of return on manufacturing capital. After falling during the 1970s and early '80s, it recovered to its level of the early '70s, about 18 cents on the dollar. That is higher than in Europe, though still well below the rate in Japan.

Contrary to popular opinion, the United States has not been neglecting technological development. Research-and-development (R&D) spending has risen from 2.1 percent of GNP in the mid-1970s to 2.8 percent in 1986, about equal to the proportions in Japan and West Germany. Industrial R&D, concentrated in manufacturing, has been increasing at an eight percent rate after adjusting for inflation over the past seven years, compared with 2.6 percent in the 1970s.

RETURN TO PRODUCTIVITY

While the United States has not been turning out engineers at the same rate as Japan, the ratio of scientists and engineers to all workers has been rising steadily since 1976 and is now four percent higher than that of Japan and about 50 percent higher than that of West Germany and France. The share of the total labor force in high-tech industries has been rising more quickly than in other Western nations.

Yet another sign of vitality is the willingness of American management to abandon its past insularity and undertake international joint ventures with European and Japanese partners. In many cases the ventures are teaching American managers and workers how to be more competitive. General Motors is sending hundreds of its manufacturing managers through the plant it owns jointly with Toyota in Fremont, California. Kodak and Du Pont have both recently set up research centers in Japan.

All of these measures are reflected in productivity growth. Usually overlooked in lamentations about American competitiveness is that its overall productivity is the world's highest. Countries such as Japan and West Germany have been enjoying higher productivity growth for years, but they are still catching up. And U.S. manufacturing productivity growth, unlike that of services, has recovered powerfully from its slump of the 1970s. Indeed, the long-term growth trend of more than three percent is now comparable to the 1960s rate. The gains should keep coming. Even industries savaged by imports during the past decade are recapturing some lost ground.

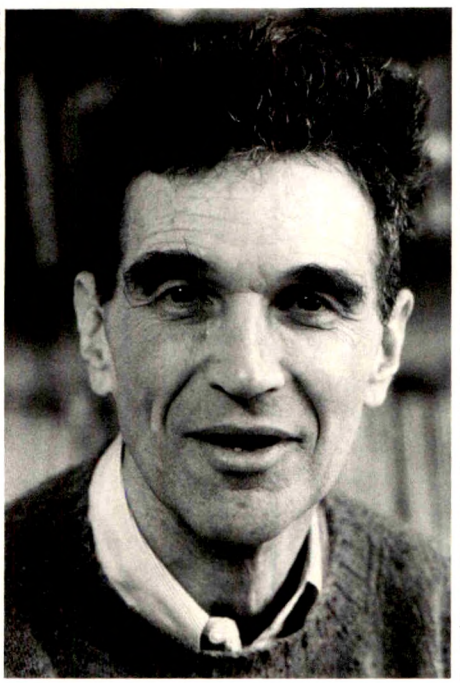
Progress could screech to a halt if protectionism takes hold, however. The historical record is unambiguous. In industry after industry—cars, steel, textiles, clothing, shoes—quotas and tariffs have only postponed the inevitable adjustments. More important, protectionism will eventually make it impossible for the United States to compete. Says MIT economist Rudiger Dornbusch: "Protection is a tax on the export industry." Import tariffs or quotas raise many of U.S. exporters' costs for materials and components and tend to push up the value of the dollar. Ultimately, lower imports of cars and steel and computer chips get offset by lower exports of computers, aircraft and chemicals. To say nothing of what retaliation would do to exports.

The revitalization of U.S. industry is still far from complete. But, unless business suddenly backs away from all that it is doing, its competitive prospects look brighter than they have since the 1960s. ♦

TEACHING ETHICS AT THE HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL

The author attempts 'to stir the moral imagination' of tomorrow's managers through reading and discussing literature.

By Robert Coles



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Robert Coles is a world-famous author, social critic and psychoanalyst who recently began to teach a course in ethics at the Harvard Business School. Although most of his students are preparing for careers as executives with top corporations, he asks them to read and discuss works of literature that raise moral questions. His approach reflects a growing concern about values and whether it is possible to teach moral decision making. The relationship between morality and art, as Dr. Coles points out, has always been subtle. Writers like Tolstoy, F. Scott Fitzgerald and William Carlos Williams do not urge "a social or cultural or political agenda....What they do is nudge us to connect our lives to the various characters in their various stories—to immerse ourselves in a world with plenty of moral drama at work."

His recent books, The Moral Life of Children *and* The Political Life of Children, *are based on interviews with children living in trouble spots around the world. In 1973 he won a Pulitzer Prize for his five-volume series,* Children of Crisis, *and in 1981 he received a prestigious MacArthur Foundation "genius" award to pursue his research. His other books include* Walker Percy: An American Search *and* Flannery O'Connor's South.

At one moment in F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby* the narrator, Nick Carraway, looking for his host during a party, wanders into Gatsby's enormous oak-paneled Gothic library. There he encounters a drunk and excited man who gestures toward the bookshelves and says, "They're real....Absolutely real—have pages and everything. I thought they'd be a nice durable cardboard. Matter of fact, they're absolutely real....It's a triumph. What thoroughness! What realism! Knew when to stop, too—didn't cut the pages."

At one level, of course, Fitzgerald is exploring the shallow ostentation that can accompany wealth. But Gatsby's unread books also ask us to reflect on all the wisdom they might have offered the enormously (and mysteriously) successful entrepreneur, all the moral energy, the personal and ethical reflection they might have prompted in him had he opened them.

In the late 1930s and '40s, another American writer was struggling hard with his own moral issues. William Carlos Williams, the New Jersey poet and physician, worked among the poor in cities such as Paterson and so was not always well paid—indeed, had a number of patients who couldn't or didn't pay him at all. At what point should he abandon them—see only the well-to-do, the well educated, many of whom were all too willing to buy his time because he was by then a well-known writer? How was he to come to terms with the social and cultural distance between himself and those mostly immigrant, working-class families whose homes he kept visiting as an old-fashioned general practitioner?

To answer such questions, he wrote a series of stories, published in 1937 under the title *Life Along the Passaic River*—a tough look, really, at the ethical questions a medical practice prompts. Each of the stories is relatively short and quite powerfully provocative. Again and again the doctor has to confront not only his patients' blind spots or moments of selfishness or insensitivity, but also his own egoism and self-importance, his narrowness and imperiousness. The doctor engages in a kind of Augustinian self-scrutiny—offering the reader through fiction a chance to do likewise: look candidly inward and see what he or she finds.

Williams the writer had a far-reaching grasp: he wrote poems, of course, and the short stories I have just mentioned; but he also had a strong interest in America's political and economic history. He never forgot that Paterson was where Alexander Hamilton founded the first American manufacturing enterprise.

His father-in-law, Paul Herman, had been a poor immigrant from Germany in 1890s New York. Soon enough he would become a skilled printer and, eventually, a rich entrepreneur, a man who owned his own business and lived exceedingly well. So even as Williams tried to evoke in stories the moral dilemmas doctors keep confronting (or ignoring willfully), he kept his writing eyes on his own world, on the comfortable town of Rutherford—a contrast, indeed, during the 1930s with Paterson—including the fortunes of his in-laws. In 1937, he also published *White Mule*, a substantial novel that was destined to be the first part of a trilogy that includes *In the Money* and *The Buildup*.

Much of what Paul Herman did along the road to business success is chronicled in the trilogy: once an associate of labor leader Samuel Gompers, he crossed picket lines, arranged the financing necessary to compete with his old bosses, and in general proved himself to be a smart, knowing and enterprising businessman. But these books offer something more than a social history of one family's rise. Williams bears down on the private side of things—the manner in which someone gets to think about life and people as the deals are cut, the bargains struck, the decisions made. These three novels, in essence, cast a close look at the ethical trials and temptations that a competitive industrial order always puts in the way of those who want to become its forceful protagonists.

I came to know Dr. Williams as an undergraduate; I wrote my thesis on the first two books of his major poem "Paterson," a lyrical examination of an important part of America's history, the old factory towns in the Northeast. He was intent in that poem on reminding his readers (and himself) of the distance that all too often separates theory from practice, ideas from conduct. "Smart isn't necessarily good," he once observed. Even in the realm of ethical reflection that tension holds: one can do brilliantly in a course on ethics and not necessarily carry such knowledge into the world of action.

Hitler had at his side, early on, all sorts of intelligent, well-educated people, including, alas, philosophers and psychoanalysts, not to mention religious leaders. Williams kept mentioning such terrible ironies to us because, after all, he had been witness to them during the 1930s and '40s in a personal way. He was a friend of Ezra Pound, whose esthetic genius, vast store of knowledge, cultivated sensibility and enormous gifts as a poet did not spare him from becoming a rabid, hate-filled propagandist for Mussolini and Hitler. "His life forced me to think about moral reflection in a new way," Williams once said.

In response to such a dilemma he did not take up programmatic moral analysis (what we should do under X, Y or Z circumstances) but rather, through storytelling, tried to reach the mind, the heart, the soul of his readers—"to affect them deeply," he once put it, "to excite their moral imagination in such a way that they sweat and tremble, toss and turn." He wanted not only the effort of intelligent consideration but also a "moral immersion"—a degree of empathy perhaps—that connects a reader's intellect with his or her personal life.

By moral imagination he meant an emotional as well as an intellectual response:

> I'm out to unnerve people—get them worried about what they might be doing, or not doing. Oh—not to hector them and point a finger

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Through storytelling, William Carlos Williams tried to reach the mind, the heart, the soul of his readers—"to affect them deeply, to excite their moral imagination in such a way that they sweat and tremble, toss and turn."

> at them, no; but if I can get people wondering about how they're doing in life, or how they might be doing in life—whether they're doing good or doing bad, and how much of each!—then I'll have done something myself. And if I've listened to myself, and my words have made a difference in my own way of living—well, that's the test, right? If you don't get nudged into practicing what you preach, or what you read—then you're at a moral standstill, I suspect.

Vintage Williams—blunt talk, the shrewdness about the mind's capacity for self-deception, the essential modesty, the capacity for self-criticism, the lack of (even antagonism toward) academic pretentiousness and, not least, the knack with words and phrases: *moral imagination*, *moral standstill*. I remember, while in medical school, asking him how some of us going into one or another profession might do the kind of reading that would get our moral imagination going—help us break out of whatever particular moral standstill threatened us. He had no easy or pat answers, of course; but he had faith in storytelling: "Hell, from the Bible onward, a parable, a tale, a story well told creeps into your chest, turns your stomach, makes your eyes widen up, your ears, too. It's not only the brain we're after!"

His words sure made a difference in my life; they got me thinking, got me ultimately to try medicine, got me also to work with children, as he did: to train in pediatrics and child psychiatry. Eventually, I ended up working with young people themselves caught in various moral struggles (school desegregation, the civil-rights movement), and later I was offered a chance to teach college students and medical students.

But what to teach? Williams's own fiction, of course, the "doctor stories," and *White Mule*, which has a way of getting readers to look at their own family histories—whence they've come, socially and economically, and where they'd like to go, and at what, if any, moral cost.

But Williams is not the only 20th-century American writer who has taken on such issues. Walker Percy, also a physician, has given us *The Moviegoer*, his 1961 novel in which a 29-year-old stockbrocker named Binx Bolling takes a sharp, searching look at the world around him, at himself as well.

"Life in Gentilly is very peaceful," Binx tells us early on. "I manage a small branch office of my uncle's brokerage firm. I am a model tenant and a model citizen and take pleasure in doing all that is expected of me. My wallet is full of identity cards. Last year I purchased a flat olive-drab strong box, very smooth and heavily built with double walls for fire protection, in which I placed my birth certificate, college diploma, honorable discharge, G.I. insurance, a few stock certificates and my inheritance." By then, of course, we are sorting out in our own minds what all those identity cards mean—how we become what we are, and where, as a consequence, we are headed.

Percy is a wonderfully comic writer, with a keen sense of how so many of us stumble or plow our way through life, forgetting all too often to ask what really matters—what (after all is said and done) we value and hope to leave behind us as our contribution to the world. His novel uses gentle humor, and sometimes social satire, in the service of philosophical reflection.

Another southern novelist of distinction, Flannery O'Connor, who died in 1964, has contributed a masterpiece to this century's moral fiction in "The Displaced Person." On one level, the story is an account of a landowner's struggles with her workers: her dissatisfaction with one of them, her decision to replace him with another.

Yet the author is really taking up the much broader subject of moral purpose—the motives that prompt our actions, whether they be business decisions or personal ones. Like Percy, Flannery O'Connor has a penetrating sense of humor and a suggestive way with words and images. A story ostensibly about the impact of a "displaced person" (come to the American South from Europe after World War II) on a seemingly complacent small-town business (farm) turns into something else—a comment on how "displaced" some of our values can on close inspection turn out to be.

I mention all of this because it provides a necessary background to how I arrived at the Harvard Business School in the spring of 1985 to teach a seminar titled "The Business World: Moral and Social Inquiry Through Fiction." By then I had become a bit of an old hand at pushing novels and short stories and occasional poems on Harvard College students and Harvard Medical School students. I'd also ventured elsewhere in the university to teach courses—to the Graduate School of Education, the law school and the Kennedy School of Government.

One day in a law-school class a student put this question to me: "Why not cross the river and teach at the business school?" I was stymied for a while by his question. What would I teach? Who would be interested in studying what I'd teach, if I could muster the kind of reading list I was used to handing out to students—lists of paperback novels or collections of short stories? Where would such a class be headed—the drifts of its explanations and the thrusts of its objectives? My wife, a secondary-school English teacher, gave a lot of thought to those questions, and together we came up with a reading list and with a sequence for the use of the books.

We decided to start with Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, an American classic, which many of the students, I would learn, had read in college but which they now read with different eyes: the story of a parvenu of sorts, but also the story of others, well established in the world of Wall Street—their 1920s moral sensibility tested by an ambitious, aspiring, lavishly hospitable outsider. We followed with Fitzgerald's *The Last Tycoon*, an effort, never fully completed, to evoke the world of Hollywood—and the struggles there between artistic and commercial forces.

Both books offer a provocative inquiry into the lives of successful and powerful people, as well as an author's mix of personal responses to such individuals: curiosity, admiration, even awe, but also apprehension, ironic amusement and, occasionally, decided disapproval. Since both novels had become movies, we were able to use them as well, and examine the way two morally energetic stories were turned into screenplays.

We moved from Fitzgerald to O'Connor's gem, "The Displaced Person," and to the film made of that story. O'Connor was a Biblical moralist, and her interest is to examine, in microcosm, such enduring aspects of humanity as greed, selfishness and hate. Such qualities of mind and heart are found in all sorts of people, she suspects.

We moved on to Saul Bellow's 1956 novel, *Seize the Day*, with its struggling, beleaguered commodities broker whose efforts to come to terms with his wife, his father and, indeed, life in general are chronicled with a gifted writer's wry, sardonic shrewdness.

Novels suggest various moral, social and psychological possibilities. They help us shape a general attitude toward living—encourage us to think about what we want and at what personal or professional cost. Such a mode of moral inquiry complements another kind, in which specific situations are analyzed and choices of action discussed.

Next came Walker Percy's *The Moviegoer*. As the stockbroker Binx Bolling tries to figure out how he should live his life, the reader is offered a wonderfully humorous and slyly observant examination of the upper-middle class in mid-20th-century America. Percy also works over certain themes the European existentialist philosophers and theologians and storytellers have found congenial. Binx's alternation between an aloof interest in self-fulfillment and moments of intense moral self-scrutiny mirrors some of the swings of attitude and behavior many of us note in ourselves.

The next writer, the late John Cheever, continues an examination, through short stories, of the privileged lives some of us lead. His territory is not Percy's South but the affluent suburbs of New York and the apartment houses of Manhattan's Upper East Side. Like Percy's, his approach is gentle, affectionate, but not without moments of rueful and somber contemplation. Some of his characters have conquered the world, yet drink too much or seem strangely isolated or withdrawn—their marriages not by any means as successful as their careers, and their children rather hurt or ailing. Cheever's affection for these men and women is obvious—as is Percy's; still, the two novelists wonder what we lose as we gain: the personal vulnerabilities that come upon us as we live our fast-paced and demanding lives.

The last section of the course was given over to the astonishing trilogy by William Carlos Williams, mentioned earlier: *White Mule*, *In the Money* and *The Buildup*. The novels evoke the moral and psychological challenges faced by those who fight to leave the ranks of the working poor to take on the risks and opportunities of the entrepreneur. The point of reading them, of reading all this fiction, is to stir a group of men and women (students and teachers alike) to take stock of themselves: what they believe in, what they want out of life, how they want to live that life. Fiction can be infectiously engaging, can prompt us to sift and sort, to consider ups and downs, desirable possibilities and potentially hurtful impasses or dead-end streets. The point, ultimately, is to stir the moral imagination, to encourage us as readers to look inward as we keep moving through our days and ways.

It is true that there are important and valuable alternatives to this mode

of moral inquiry—the case history, for instance. In medicine and business, morally challenging incidents are constantly taking place—decisions about whether (as a doctor) one ought to pull a plug, an intravenous needle, a stomach tube, or (as a businessperson) make this kind of arrangement, embark on that direction. No wonder then that ethics courses devoted to cases are an increasingly familiar presence in many of our medical and business schools.

Still, ethical inquiry can have another, broader dimension to it, can be directed not only at one or another occupational choice but also at the kind of life being lived by one or another doctor, lawyer, businessperson, teacher, architect. Novels and short stories lend themselves especially well to this kind of reflection. They need not become the basis for didactic insistence—the urging of a social or cultural or political agenda. Nor are they meant to be diagnostic or prescriptive. What they do is nudge us to connect our lives to the lives of the various characters in their various stories, to immerse ourselves in a world with plenty of moral drama at work.

Talking about his trilogy, Williams said:

> You won't find answers in those novels, but you'll find lots of questions asked—by indirection.... I try to bring the reader up close, so close that his empathy puts him in the shoes of the characters. You hope when he closes the books his own character is influenced!

That last comment is especially interesting—the impact of characters in a story on the character of the reader. It reminds me of the important distinction Emerson made in 1837 in his essay "The American Scholar": "Character is higher than intellect." Novels don't supply the intellect its prized formulations, but rather, suggest various moral, social and psychological possibilities—stimulate the mind's capacity to wonder, to dream, to put itself in all sorts of situations, and to be shaped by such imaginative experiences. Novels help us shape a general attitude toward living—encourage us to think about what we want and at what personal or professional cost. Such a mode of moral inquiry complements the other kind, in which specific situations are analyzed and choices of action discussed.

Efforts to look inward morally with the help of storytellers can run into trouble. The teacher can become self-righteous or a scold—can use the various books assigned as thinly disguised instruments of polemical assertion or condemnation. Tone is all-important—as students themselves quickly appreciate. Do you really want to pour rain on a parade—use Fitzgerald's ironies or Cheever's gentle satire as severe and provocative challenges, to the point that students become antagonistic and feel themselves and their future work arraigned, condemned?

I have seen plenty of arrogance and selfishness in the supposedly gentler, more "humanistic" professions—snobbishness, self-importance and meanness or hardness of spirit in doctors, in the clergy, in educators, in the so-called arts, and certainly, in my own branch of medicine, psychoanalytic psychiatry. Years of personal analysis, of education, of postgraduate supervision have not prevented many of us from becoming dogmatic, smug and fiercely antagonistic to those who happen to disagree with us.

I try to keep such thoughts in mind when I ask future corporate leaders or financiers to take a sharp and candid look, or a smiling and wry one, at certain moral pitfalls. The labor leader, the political reformer, the egalitarian theorist, the medical healer, the minister or priest, the college teacher, even the moral philosopher or wise novelist are in the end all flawed human beings, no less in jeopardy as they go about their lives than those out there in the marketplace.

I was enormously impressed with the diversity of the business-school students I taught, with their moral earnestness, with their willingness to work long and hard at the reading assigned, both in and out of class. Their papers were singularly affecting: in a page or two they connected their experiences to those of the characters in this or that novel. Our class became progressively more relaxed and intimate. We drank beer toward the end. We had a dinner. Months after the course was over and the students had left for the world of business, I received letters with ideas for further reading and repeated suggestions that the class have a reunion. Individual readers became members of a particular, inquiring community whose bonds still hold at this writing, almost a year later.

Meanwhile, I hope to keep teaching the course—adding this time around Tolstoy's powerful story "Master and Man," in which a Russian winter storm envelops a businessman and his servant: a morally suggestive drama of great intensity. My hunch is that the men and women who took the course last year will keep doing their own reading of the kind we all did together—or so it seems, given their letters to me with thoughts for the course in future years. As one student now working on Wall Street put it to me, "Reading these novels can become a habit, a habit of being." He was referring to a phrase Flannery O'Connor once used that became the title for a collection of her letters.

It was nice, I thought, hearing an existentialist description given to the idea of staying in touch with novels and short stories over the course of one's life. The existentialists emphasize the finite individuality of each of us, our private and personal struggles to comprehend this confused and confusing world; and they emphasize the aloneness each of us experiences, our lonely search for meaning. Hence the appropriateness of that former student's phrase as he tried to let me know that fiction as a moral source can work not only in a class at Harvard Business School but also in an individual's continuing life: again, "a habit of being" acquired. ♦

RODEN'S EYE

By Fred Hapgood

Artist James Turrell is reshaping a volcanic mountain named Roden into a massive project that explores the nature of pure vision.

Deep within the desert of the southwestern United States, James Turrell has embarked on an unusual project: transforming an extinct volcano called Roden Crater into what will probably be the largest piece of serious art in the world. But this ambitious work is much more than art. It involves optics (illusions of visual perception), architecture, psychology (gestalt patterns), astronomy (radio waves from stars) and metaphysics ("Turrell's work is asking you to question the very nature of materiality," according to one critic). Here science writer Fred Hapgood, who recently traveled to Arizona to observe Turrell's mysterious work in progress, writes about the man and the mountain.

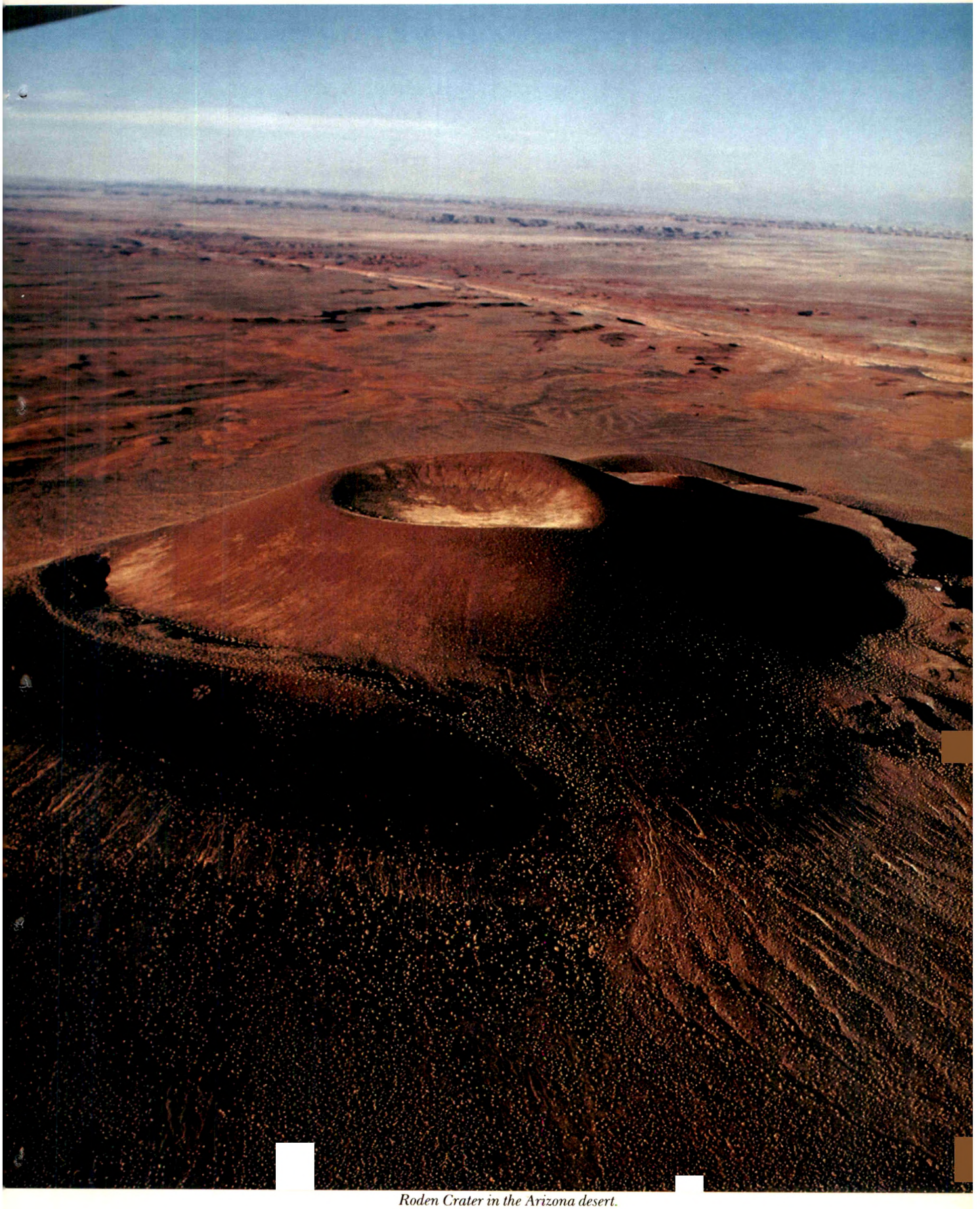
Hapgood frequently reports about science for national publications. The author of Space Shots *and* Why Males Exist, *he currently is working on a study of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.*

Millions of years ago a vent tore open many kilometers beneath what is now central Arizona. Through this lesion the pressures of the deep interior took slow aim at the roof of that world, the floor of our own, and commenced a bombardment of molten rock. Over time this volcanic field moved north and east, just nicking the edge of Arizona's Painted Desert. Right at the point where field and sands touch, a small, exceptionally well-formed cinder cone can be seen, standing off from the other volcanoes, deeper into the desert. This is Roden Crater.

In the past few years a swelling stream of curators, astronomers and other scientists, artists, journalists and collectors have been flying into Flagstaff, Arizona, to visit a construction project at nearby Roden. The exact nature of the project is not simple to pin down, though certainly most visitors would agree that what is proceeding is the construction of a piece of contemporary art—a combination of earthwork, sculpture and architecture, and almost certainly the largest piece of serious art under way in the world today. The *Los Angeles Times* called it "an astonishing project of staggering magnitude." An article in *The Wall Street Journal* said that in Roden Crater "the sun and the moon and the stars will be given the stage upon which they [will] have the opportunity to present themselves as they will, like dancers in the sky." John Russell, art critic for *The New York Times*, predicted that the crater will "mediate on our behalf between geological time and celestial time." Count Giuseppe Panza di Biumo, a widely respected collector of contemporary art, has called Roden "the Sistine Chapel of America."

Part of this otherworldly descrip-

© 1987 Fred Hapgood. From *The Atlantic*.



Roden Crater in the Arizona desert.

tion stems from the reluctance of the man behind the project, artist James Turrell, to present the enterprise in any definitive way. The prospectus for the project, for instance, is nothing more than a list of the chambers he plans to build along the walls or under the floor of the crater. One of these is a 300-meter tunnel constructed such that once every 18.61 years, weather permitting, the image of the moon will fill its entire opening for a few moments and appear on the rear wall. There are also chambers sited to "capture" rare kinds of light that appear in the skies over the desert.

When collared directly, Turrell seems willing enough to explain his intentions, but somehow, mysteriously, his language seems always to fall just short of communicating anything definite. At one point he says that he is building "prebuilt primitive art" and "one of the major ruins of the future," at another that he is searching for a way "to make manifest what the space inside the crater is seeing." (He also has been quoted as saying that the finished crater will be a musical instrument upon which celestial bodies will beat out, in light, the rhythms of the spheres.)

As opaque as the Roden project may be, Turrell has already raised one million dollars and persuaded a foundation to buy him the mountain, and he can call on the energies of dozens of volunteers. Clearly, there is something here that touches the heart. When I visited, Turrell was in the midst of reshaping the saddle form of the crater's bowl into an ellipse whose rim measures nearly 300 meters by 270 meters across and more than 40 meters deep.

The view from the lip was remarkable. The summer rains had just fallen, brushing tints of green and flax over the rust and black and tan of the sands outside the cone. Off into the desert, which lay open to view for more than 150 kilometers, the land shifted between pinks and oranges as intense as those of cheap cosmetics. None of these hues was stable: as clouds passed and the sun wheeled overhead, the colors of the landscape transformed in measured and deliberate steps, as though a composition were being played.

All around, dozens of slanted, ribbonlike shadows cast by clouds sailed at different speeds and in different directions. There was a sense of standing on the floor of an ocean saturated with light. In between the desert and the surface of this ocean, far overhead, lived the gliding shafts of cloud shadow, the sheets of air, each marked with a distinct species of cloud, crossing each other at different altitudes, and the patterns of radiance shifting as the sun, curving west, illuminated the texture of the atmosphere, as if with pedagogical intent.

After several minutes Roden, which is 75 stories high, seemed to flatten right out onto the desert floor. All that was left was a mass of tumbleweed in the crater, lying flat as a stain. The great weight of the space above appeared to press the crater down into the desert like a preserved leaf. Later I mentioned this optical illusion to Turrell. "Right," he said, as though I had answered a question.

The reasons that visitors arrive, contribute and go home lit with enthusiasm probably lie less in the view than in the reputation of the artist behind the project. Though only in his mid-40's, James Turrell is by any standard a major American artist. He has had retrospectives at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, and he has shown at the Leo Castelli Gallery in New York, one of the most prestigious private galleries in the world. He holds a MacArthur "genius" award fellowship.

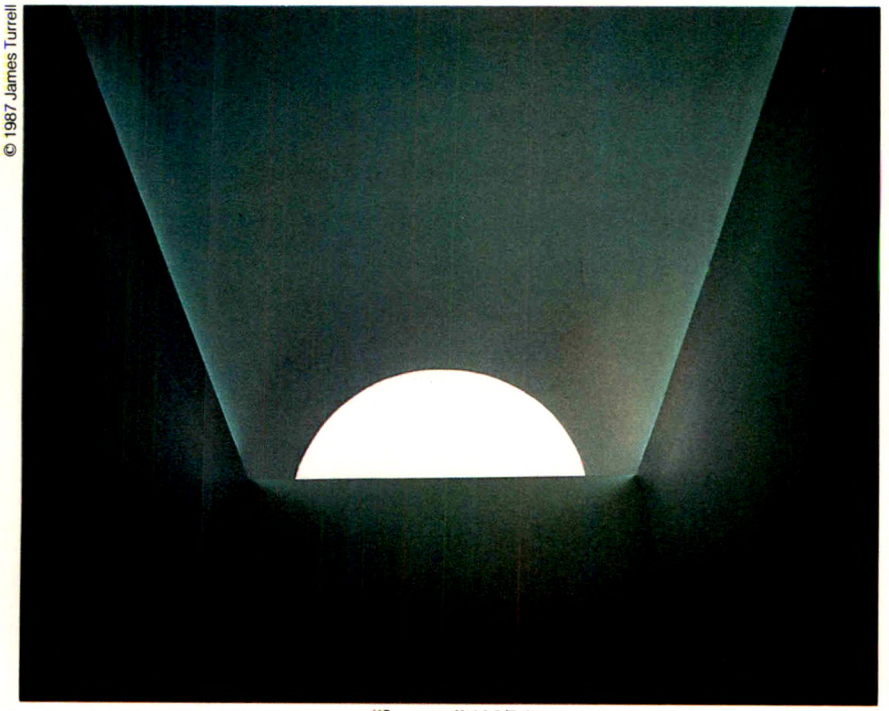
These triumphs have rested on his mastery not of oil or watercolor but of a medium known as the "homogeneous field," a visual experience that is to the eye what white noise is to the ear—a perfectly featureless sensorium. The reader might experience one of these fields by cutting a hole in a large piece of paper, taking it outside and holding it in front of a region of the sky that is cloudless and not uncomfortably bright. The area within the hole is a homogeneous field. Perhaps the best known of these "undifferentiated surrounds" are whiteouts—the moments during snowstorms when every line, shade, shape and form is swallowed by whiteness.

Until Turrell grasped their expressive power, these fields had been curiosities of the psychology lab. They were studied first by gestalt psychologists in the 1930s, who surrounded subjects with meticulously whitewashed and neutrally lit boards in the hope that "homogeneous stimulation" of the visual field, or the *Ganzfeld*, would reveal the nature of the primal visual experience. The technique was reborn in the early 1950s, when perceptual psychologists developed several new ways of generating the fields. One was to split a Ping-Pong ball, tape the hemispheres over the eyes of the subject, and project lights, which might differ in color between the right and the left, onto the curves of the ball halves.

Both generations of psychologists found the technique difficult to control: their subjects couldn't agree on what it was they were seeing. Apparently, the human retina refuses to believe in homogeneous fields. When exposed to one, it tolerates the phenomenon for a few moments and then begins casting about for other possibilities. Different retinas produce different theories. The most common report was of "swimming in a mist of light which becomes more condensed at an indefinite distance." Most subjects described "sensing something vaguely surfacelike in front of the face"; some described a "cone-shaped three-dimensional surface," a "cracked-ice effect," a "weblike structure" or rings of different sizes and shapes. When a homogeneous field was used as the ground against which an object was viewed, contours blurred and shapes transformed. Sometimes the objects seemed to vanish, leaving subjects uncertain as to whether their eyes were even open. Aftereffects included extreme fatigue, great lightness of body, dizziness and impaired motor coordination, sense of balance and time perception. Sometimes subjects appeared intoxicated.

Viewer reaction was hard to control and categorize, and perhaps for this reason homogeneous fields soon disappeared from serious scientific literature. However, they had not quite done so by the early 1960s, when Turrell, then a student at Pomona College in California, ran across references to them while pursuing an interest in the perception of light. A little-known part of the decade's art scene was "perceptual environments," which set out to suggest that the perception of an object was less a function of the

James Turrell's triumphs have rested on his mastery not of paint but of a medium known as the "homogeneous field," a visual experience that is to the eye what white noise is to the ear—perfectly featureless.

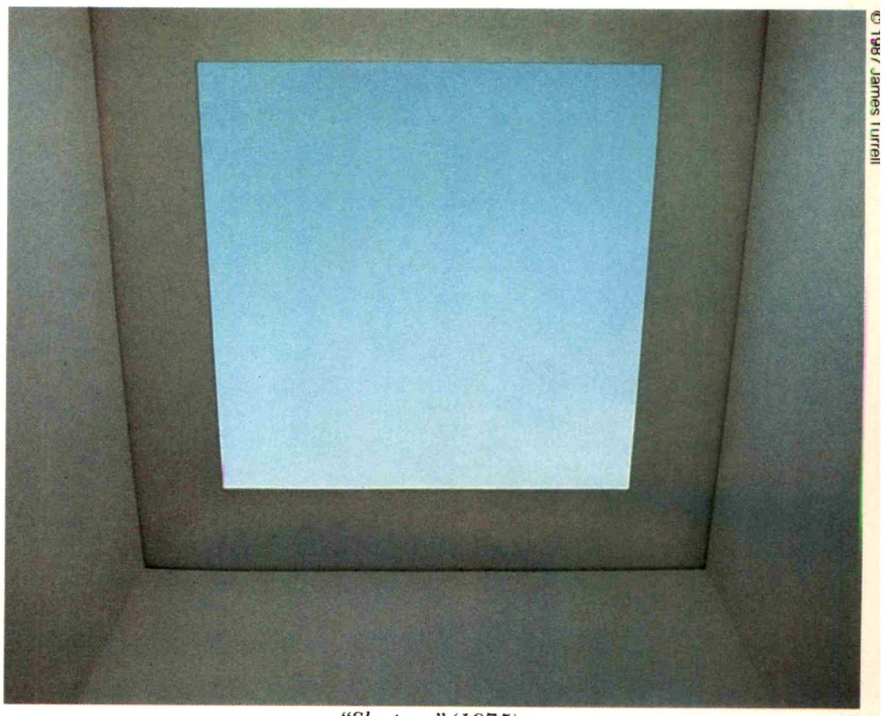

© 1987 James Turrell

"Lunette" (1976)

object itself than of the establishment-defined environment surrounding that object. This was the wing Turrell drifted into and the context in which he began to explore the special power of the homogeneous field. In particular, in 1968 Turrell, the Los Angeles artist Robert Irwin, and Ed Wortz, a physiological psychologist, entered into a celebrated collaboration to probe the possibilities of the fields.

During the next 10 years Turrell discovered how to create these "light mists," as some call them, so that they could be experienced by wandering spectators—people who were not even seated, let alone wearing Ping-Pong balls. He would, for example, paint a chamber white, manipulating its dimensions and illumination until someone looking into the enclosure saw the desired effect. He learned how to make his chambers responsive to external events such as the presence and the pace of spectators; how to work with different qualities and intensities of light (he continues to use every kind of source, from quartz halogen and xenon bulbs to simple daylight, moonlight and starlight); how to introduce structures, like screens of light, into the fields; how to tint the fields with different hues, and how to make them seem to shimmer, to fill up with smoke, to develop a grain, to present a skin or surface. During this time he exhibited only twice. When his show opened at the Whitney, in 1980, almost no one in the New York art world had any advance word on him.

A visitor to the show saw chambers, most the size of small rooms, filled with light. There was nothing in these spaces but light, usually of a single shade. There was almost no sense of the artist's hand, of a deliberate manipulation. The light in the chambers appeared alternately transparent and opaque. Some viewers experienced an illusion of solidity so pronounced that they tried to lean against the large chamber openings and fell through; three of them suffered such injuries to their bodies and egos that they filed suits against Turrell for maintaining a deliberate and dangerous deception. The critics were ecstatic. They declared the medium sensationally nov-


© 1987 James Turrell

"Skyspace" (1975)



© 1987 George Wray

From inside Roden Crater, the moon at sunset.



© 1987 James Turrell

Looking toward the horizon from the rim of the crater.

Someone left to poke around Roden, knowing nothing of the actual history, might guess that it was a temple built thousands of years ago by a sect of Native American skyworshipers and long since abandoned.

el and the pieces utter knockouts, combining sensuousness with minimalist elegance. Many found them numinous, mystical, an invitation to meditate on the nature of the void. In particular, the critics embraced their power to destabilize perception, the delicious way in which they subverted the very idea of looking. Ross Wetzsteon of *The Village Voice* wrote,

> As you watch, your sense of substance constantly shifts—the panel solid, then dematerialized, then solid once more...the panel floats in space, toward you, away from you, shimmering in place. You're hypnotized, confused—what you experience contradicts what you "know," and you begin to realize that James Turrell's work is asking you to question the very nature of materiality.

A "brilliant success," said Robert Hughes, art critic for *Time* magazine.

> In contemplating these peaceful and august light chambers, one is confronted...with the reflection of one's own mind creating its illusions and orientations, and this becomes the "subject" of the work. The art, it transpires, is not in front of your eyes. It is behind them.

A person thinking about homogeneous fields would naturally find himself reflecting on the greatest of these: the sky. Turrell, an enthusiastic pilot who spends as much time in the air as he can, had abundant opportunity for this sort of reflection. The illusion that the sky is a ceiling, which goes by the pretty name of celestial vaulting, is famously strong in children, and most of us, if asked to set aside what we know about the atmosphere, could come up with an altitude at which the ceiling appears to lie at any one moment. This figure is not stable: the closer the horizon, the lower the ceiling. Turrell's first thought was of a big bowl in which people could walk up and down the interior walls. As viewers moved down the sides of the bowl, the horizon, defined by the lip, would narrow and the sky would descend. What he found most intriguing about the idea was its power to show that people "control the shape of the space in which they move."

For anyone else with these interests, the next step would have been to build a huge bowl on some municipal plaza. Turrell instead made a remarkable decision: only a volcano crater would do. And not just any crater. It should have a rim that was both circular and flat, be 120 or 150 meters above the plain and at least 1500 meters above sea level (so that the sky's color would deepen), be away from the light pollution and haze of a city and be in a setting that would extend the artwork into the surrounding landscapes and skies "so that the piece itself would have no end." Turrell got in his plane and flew off to inspect, individually, each of the thousands of volcanoes dotting the North American cordillera. The search took seven months and more than 500 hours of air time, and extended from the Canadian border to the Mexican border. Eventually he found Roden.

But Turrell had a problem with Roden's owner, a cattle rancher, who could not be persuaded of the benefit of having an art museum, or something, right in the center of his range. Turrell approached the Dia Art Foundation, which specializes in supporting large environmental pieces. Dia agreed to buy the crater, pay for reshaping the bowl and take over maintenance and visitor control once the project was finished.

During these negotiations to buy Roden, which went on for three years, Turrell visited the crater often. He slept in it, winter and summer, and noticed how the volcano aligned itself to the dawn and the sunset and to the orbits of the planets, and how the colors of the site, of land and sky, changed with the seasons. One day, when he was wandering around outside the crater, Turrell looked up and noticed that a cap cloud had formed over the top of Roden. He scrambled up the side of the volcano and plunged into the cloud. It was different from thick seacoast fogs, in which the light level is quite low, he says. At this altitude, more than 1800 meters above sea level, sunlight penetrated all through, evenly lighting the suspended droplets. The whole space glowed: a homogeneous field.

In 1977 persistence triumphed and Roden Crater was sold to the Dia Art Foundation, about 450 hectares for $64,000. By then Turrell's interests had spread far beyond celestial vaulting, and he had a whole new set of plans to lay before the art foundation. One was for a sort of radiotelescope: his idea was to carve a room within the crater and embed in its walls a wire cage that would shield it from radio waves. A circular depression would be cut in the floor and filled with water; just above the depression a circle of the same diameter would be cut through the roof shielding. An arrangement of antennae and crystals would pick up the radio energies passing into the chamber through the hole in the shielding, convert them into acoustic vibrations and release those vibrations into the water. Thus, on a clear night, someone lying in the bath and looking through the hole in the roof would be able to hear the sounds of the stars in the area he was observing.

Most of the proposed rooms were designed to show colors and color changes associated with the movements of the sun and moon and with changes in the weather. For instance, at sunset a band of pink and blue, sometimes called the twilight arch, lifts up out of the eastern horizon and

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Artist Turrell in front of Roden, which he calls a "major ruin of the future."

leads the night over the sky. In one of the chambers an aperture would be cut to capture the rays of the twilight arch for a minute or two during each sunset; during the capture, this light would be "fogged up" into one of Turrell's trademark light mists. Some chambers would be entered from a ramp that would rise, curving around the cone, from the desert surface, others from a tunnel that would meet the main, moon-sighting tunnel. There would be perhaps half a dozen such chambers, conveying the effect of observatories or galleries of the light of the heavens, the empyrean.

The Dia Art Foundation expressed interest but never could quite decide to fund the project. In 1981 Turrell offered to take over the entire project. Dia agreed and transferred ownership of Roden to a foundation set up for that purpose, called Skystone, which Turrell financed with grants. Since then he has mastered the delicate art of supplying power to the construction equipment with wind, laid down the access road, established a base camp, drilled a well, installed the pipelines needed for construction and restoration of the site, and begun shaping the rim into a circle.

Turrell asserts that no one flying overhead will have any sense that construction has taken place. The finished project will have none of the clues that identify works of art or art institutions: there will be no labels on the walls, no information booth, no recorded cassette lectures for rent. There will be no gift shop, restaurant, visitors' register or plastic box for contributions. No postcards will be sold. There will be no security guards, parking lot, landing strip or escalators. In fact, if Turrell's dream is perfectly realized, there will be no spectators, or hardly any: he thinks the largest number of visitors the project can handle will be three a day.

Roden will be swept clean of references not only to the artist, art object and art institution but also, aside from a few concessions to safety, to post-Renaissance Western civilization. There are no lenses at Roden, no track lighting, no loudspeakers. (The "radio room" is one example of the ingenuity with which references to this civilization have been dodged.) Someone left to poke around the project on his own, knowing nothing of the actual history, might guess that it was a temple built thousands of years ago by a sect of Native American sky-worshipers and long since abandoned. As much as possible, only local minerals are being used: desert sand, volcanic obsidian for the resonating bathtub and shale from the bottom of a nearby Jurassic Era lagoon for the outside walkways, which will give the construction the look of having been built by a people without trucks. (One chamber escapes from the present era in the other direction: a shaft pointed to Polaris, the North Star, monitors the precession of the Earth's pole to Vega, which will become the new North Star in 12,000 years.)

Yet the enterprise could not be more high-tech. For instance, the astronomer collaborating with Turrell on the moon-sighting tunnel has been working on the math for three years. Drilling the tunnel will require a laser-guided "mole."

Turrell seems to have a vision of a world whose active components are not physical entities, things with weight, but spaces. To most of us, a visual act or event is a two-party affair, linking the observer with the observed. Turrell seems to believe that all the action happens in the space that separates the two. The space makes the decisions; it controls what the observer sees and what the observed shows. Sometimes it seems that he sees spaces as conscious life forms; he talks of watching spaces watch themselves. "Roden Crater has knowledge in it, and it does something with that knowledge," he says. "It is an eye, something that is itself perceiving....When you're there, it has visions."

After the sky had rolled the crater out on that first day of my visit, I turned, half dizzy, away from the ocean floating overhead, walked to the bottom of the bowl, lay down, and looked back at the rim. The wind had vanished; the air grew softer and warmer. Flies whined among the tumbleweeds. The walls of the crater had drawn into the sky, and the sky had descended to lie across them. The illusion of being sealed inside was so strong that my brain felt compelled to manufacture the sound, faint but unmistakable, of metal sliding over metal. Not five meters overhead, it seemed, tiny clouds, like white flecks in fingernails, scrolled by. One would have thought that the volcano had just given them birth, and there they were, streaming off toward all corners of the globe, ready to take up the great work that lay ahead. ♦

REVIEWS

HISTORY

To the New World

VOYAGERS TO THE WEST: A PASSAGE IN THE PEOPLING OF AMERICA ON THE EVE OF THE REVOLUTION. By Bernard Bailyn. *Alfred A. Knopf. 704 pp.*

Reviewed by Naomi Bliven

Bernard Bailyn's *The Peopling of British North America: An Introduction*, a compact summary of more than a decade of research, appeared in 1986. It started to change our way of looking at the past. It also served as a preface to Bailyn's multivolume study of immigration to North America before the Industrial Revolution, of which the first installment, *Voyagers to the West: A Passage in the Peopling of America on the Eve of the Revolution*, is now available. A surprising amount of detailed source material about common people survives from that age of aristocracy, and *Voyagers to the West* scrutinizes a register of emigrants from England and Scotland which was compiled by customs officers at ports of embarkation between December 1773 and March 1776. Emigration had been so heavy that many Britons feared their country would be depopulated—something like three percent of the population of Scotland emigrated between 1760 and 1775—and the British government designed a questionnaire to discover who was leaving and why, where each emigrant came from, and where he or she was going. Similar records are available from Germany.

Bailyn's book is impressive and affecting, because of the twofold use he makes of these hitherto neglected archives. The author, who is a history professor at Harvard University, has analyzed the data with a computer to wring out every drop of history, and he has followed the lives of individuals to bring us a reality we might have thought attainable only in imagination. He has so much information to impart that he does not stop to argue, yet as he tells his story he demolishes a host of myths that plague our thinking. He explains that migration across the Atlantic was an extension of migrations within Europe, and data he cited in *Peopling* make hash of the notion that preindustrial Europeans lived stable lives in stable communities. Migration to America was related to events in Europe, and both volumes show how closely the colonies were bound to the rest of the world, which shipped them a formidably cosmopolitan population. At least four languages were spoken in 18th-century Georgia. The immigrants described in *Voyagers* found "no single 'American' pattern of family and community organization." Bailyn attributes the rush of immigrants to land speculation and to a chronic shortage of labor in the colonies, and he finds that these magnetic forces attracted different kinds of immigrants. Land speculators sought farming families to settle the huge tracts they had acquired. American employers, through their agents, recruited skilled workers—single men, for the most part, who came over alone, often as indentured servants.

Everybody who possibly could invest in North American land did so—middle-class Americans as well as British nabobs—for what are now whole states were for sale at derisory prices. The problem was enticing settlers to turn wilderness into profitable real estate. Some land-investment schemes failed because the cost of development was too high. One failure that Bailyn describes planned to rescue oppressed Christians from the Turkish Empire and settle them on raw land in Florida: promoters collected 1403 people from the Mediterranean—Italians, Greeks, Corsicans and Minorcans, men, women and children—and transported them to New Smyrna, where, between 1768 and 1777, 80 percent of them died, victims of malnutrition, disease and the brutality of overseers attempting to salvage the project. More of Bailyn's land-settlement stories, however, tell of successes, including the migration of Yorkshire farmers to Nova Scotia and the migration of Scottish farmers to Vermont and New York.

His account of conditions on both sides of the Atlantic is a practical

Naomi Bliven, long a book critic for The New Yorker, *is coauthor of* New York: The Story of the World's Most Exciting City.

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Historian Bernard Bailyn

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guide to 18th-century farming. He describes that abstraction "the agricultural revolution" as specific changes and specific effects on particular pieces of land in Yorkshire and Scotland. Yorkshire's great landowners, bent on improvement, radically reorganized their holdings; raised rents on the new parcels, which were fewer, larger and more productive; and celebrated their new riches by building magnificent houses, whose architecture, interior decoration and gardens are admired and studied today. In their own time, the construction of any one of these nonesuch mansions was the signal for an exodus of tenants who could not or would not pay the new rents on the manor. The easiest aspect of land speculation to grasp is the economic calculation. "Buy the acre, sell the foot" is an American adage, and bookkeeping rather than music may be the universal language of Western man. Where the imagination needs help is in envisioning American land as it was: seeing, for example, picture-postcard Vermont as the Lowland Scot farmers found it—mere nature, as strange to them as to us.

In recent years, black historians have reminded us how much of the United States was built by African slaves. Slaves are present in *Voyagers*, but the book pays more attention to other kinds of unfree labor—indentured servants and convicts. It is shocking to read how much of the country's original growth was the product of servitude rather than liberty, and the exploitative harshness of the colonial labor market is shocking, too, even though the author warns us at the start that his history occurs in a "prehumanitarian" age. With labor, as with land, Bailyn recounts the participants' calculations. European workers who were not wholly destitute received conflicting advice about whether to pay their own passage to America and arrive free but penniless or to hold on to their savings and sign indentures—contracts that exchanged a specific number of years' labor for transportation to America. The middlemen hoped to sell the indentured servants and their time for more than the cost of shipping them, and their calculations aimed at speed from the moment of recruitment in Europe to the moment of sale of the workers on New World docks.

The passage itself might defy calculation, because of the caprices of the Atlantic, and the effects of weather, crowding and disease on the servants belowdecks. Bailyn finds no certain figure for the death rate on the crossings. Estimates agree it was lower than that aboard slave ships, but one eyewitness, Tom Paine, thought survival chancy. Servants who did not sell quickly in American ports were "lumped" wholesale and bought by "soul drivers," who also bought convicts and marched these groups through the country, peddling them by the way or auctioning them at inland market towns. Bailyn describes the American enterprises that were most voracious for labor. Ironworks needed miners, colliers, quarriers, carters, woodcutters, founders, carpenters and blacksmiths as well as unskilled laborers. On the eve of the Revolution, there were more than 250 ironworks—industrial settlements in the American woods which produced a seventh of the world's iron. Bailyn notes that the United States did not match that level of production until after the Civil War.

This discontinuity in America's own past development may suggest that many current economic plans and expectations for Third World countries are excessive, but Bailyn's purpose is not to counsel on policy. His concern—his passion—is to make the emigrants and their experiences live once more. He quotes the recollections of John Harrower, an indentured servant who was lucky enough to be bought at dockside, and of Peter Williamson and James Revel, who were driven up-country for sale. Their words clarify the meaning of "prehumanitarian." It has sometimes been alleged that victims or losers or sufferers in earlier times were less sensitive to misfortune than we are, but Bailyn's memoirists feel exactly what we would—fear, humiliation and resentment at those who drove them, Williamson said, "like a parcel of sheep to the slaughter, exposing us for sale in all public fairs and markets, as brute beasts." Those who bid and those who observed, however, did not feel, as presumably we would, much active sympathy. Bailyn provides, as well, an idea of how the emigrants looked: in collaboration with the art-

ist Richard Schlecht, he has included a portrait gallery of indentured servants based on descriptions in advertisements for the return of runaways.

Bailyn has complied with modern historical demands for the statistical and quantifiable—demands that have been useful in reducing intrusions of guesswork and opinion but that threatened for a while to make history something other than a human story. He has also gone far beyond number, and made us understand this epic of hardship and adaptability as if we had been part of it. His fusions—of the general and the particular, of the abstract and the concrete, of thought and feeling—are the ideal of modern historical writing. ♦

JAZZ

Artful Monologues

AMERICAN MUSICIANS: FIFTY-SIX PORTRAITS IN JAZZ. Whitney Balliett. *Oxford University Press. 415 pp.*

Reviewed by Bruce Cook

Nobody today writes as well about jazz as Whitney Balliett. (Only one other person is even in his class, Nat Hentoff, and he seldom takes up music anymore.) The proof of Balliett's preeminence is right here between the covers of this book. *American Musicians* brings together 49 pieces of his, nearly all of which first appeared in *The New Yorker* and have been part of five earlier anthologies of his work. Call this, then, the quintessential Whitney Balliett, the cream of the cream, a collection that leaves no doubt about his strength.

Good as he is, Balliett does have a weakness or two. As a critic he tends to be rather indifferent toward younger jazz musicians, particularly those of the rock-influenced "jazz fusion" school. He concentrates his attention primarily on older players and on those firmly grounded in "classic jazz." In treating his favorites he also sometimes errs on the side of generosity. To say that he is the best jazz writer around, therefore, is not to suggest he is the best jazz critic. Criticism is not really his bag.

Balliett excels at the kinds of pieces he has decided to preserve with this volume. In a note at the beginning of the book he calls them "biographical essays," and although that description fits some accurately, the subtitle, *Portraits in Jazz*, if less exact, better defines the rest. For the most part, he lets the subjects do the talking—and to that extent they are *self*-portraits. But they are not simply interviews. Information gleaned by the tried and true question-and-answer method has been artfully arranged into monologues that have the musicians talking about their lives, their music and whatever else interests, annoys or excites them.

Does this mean Whitney Balliett is no more than a skilled editor? Not at all, for the monologues are introduced—and from time to time interrupted—with wonderfully incisive comments and factual nuggets. Balliett takes great pains in his interpolations to tell us exactly what sort of music these men and women make. His lyrical yet curiously precise descriptions cannot be surpassed. For instance: "[Art] Tatum was a restless, compulsive player who abhorred silence. He used the piano's orchestral possibilities to the fullest, simultaneously maintaining a melodic voice, a harmonic voice, a variety of decorative voices, and a kind of whimsical voice, a laughing, look-Ma-no-hands voice. The effect was both confounding and exhilarating."

Tatum, having died in 1956, was not around to tell his own story; the piece on him is one of a number discussing the distinguished dead that might truly be called biographical essays. Balliett weaves into them observations from those who knew the subjects well and, where appropriate, fleshes them out with a bit of his own research. What is remarkable is that he brings us new material in the case of each musician he treats—including those like Jelly Roll Morton and Lester Young who have been written about so often before. Indeed, they emerge in all their dimensions. Clarinetist Sidney Bechet, especially, comes across as a complex, spikey individual—he did a year in a French prison for a shooting incident in Paris in the 1920s—and not the sweet, genial, white-haired fellow who could always be counted on to say the right thing to a respectful interviewer.

About Lester Young's complexity there was never any doubt. Just take a look at Dexter Gordon's portrayal of the tenor-saxophonist in the film *Round Midnight* for a glimpse into an individual so outré that he was considered weird even by his fellow musicians. But Balliett shows us his soft side, citing times when the anger Young hid behind his cool mask finally overflowed and he was reduced to tears. We are told, too, of the dedicated performer who lectured singer Sylvia Syms, "Lady Syms, if there is one guy in the whole house who is listening—and maybe he's in the *bathroom*—you've got an audience."

There are also essays on Fats Waller and King Oliver, among others long departed. The bulk of this fine collection, however, consists of the self-portraits. The musicians talk. That in itself is noteworthy, since jazz musicians are seldom very forthcoming or articulate about their art. Balliett, for example, spent a couple of days with the late pianist Mary Lou Williams, a woman usually so shy she seemed almost tight-lipped, and she went on and on about her music, her personal history, her religion. She opened up as she never had for any other writer. Why for Whitney Balliett? I suspect it is because he has a measure of the same quality the Chicago interviewer-writer Studs Terkel is said to exude—"that feeling tone."

Because Balliett frequently speaks to his subjects at home, he captures the domestic lives of people who might be thought to have none. When you listen to Pee Wee Russell, Henry "Red" Allen and Red Norvo reminiscing while wives, children and grand-

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Pee Wee Russell at the Newport Jazz Festival, 1958

Rapho Guillumette

children move in and out of the picture, you get a sense of these men as complete human beings who have had troubles and overcome them, who have made the bargains with life that we all must make in order to survive.

Wives often figure prominently in these pieces. The portrait of guitarist Jim Hall, an exceptional man, begins with his wife Jane talking about her own life (she is a psychiatric social worker), how she met Hall and what she thinks of jazz musicians. It all fits, and its inclusion emphasizes her role in Hall's career. Balliett's piece on Zoot Sims is titled "Zoot and Louise," for here the interviewee-monologuist is Sims's widow Louise, the person who knew him best. It is a wonderful, warm obituary written shortly after the tenorman died of cancer. Louise Sims was recovering from serious eye surgery at the time of Balliett's visit, and she tells him, "The worst thing is not working. I'm not up to commuting. I'd have to move back to New York, and I don't want to do that yet. This house is so full of Zoot I can't bear leaving it."

But the dominant spirit of the book is happy, even joyful—as vibraharpist Red Norvo underlines when he declares, "The main thing is that jazz should be fun." Norvo relates an anecdote about his ex-wife Mildred Bailey and Bessie Smith: "Bessie was crazy about Mildred. She and Mildred used to laugh at each other and do this routine. They were both big women, and when they saw each other one of them would say, 'Look, I've got this brand-new dress, but it's too big for me, so why don't *you* take it?' And they'd both break up."

Stories involving difficult circumstances generally seem more wacky than sad. Listen to Art Farmer: "When I wasn't working, Miles Davis would rent my horn for $10 a night. His was pawned, I guess. I'd go wherever the gig was—Hackensack or Brooklyn, or wherever—to make sure he didn't pawn mine." And the musicians harbor some curious notions. Says French jazz critic Charles Delaunay of Gypsy guitarist Django Reinhardt: "Well, I knew what Django's dream was, because he told me so many times, 'If Louis [Armstrong] would hear me, he would take me to America where I would be the guest of Clark Gable and play for the Hollywood stars right by their pools.' "

I could continue, but by now my point should be clear. *American Musicians* is a lovely book about jazz by a writer who is nonpareil at what he does. He can be interesting on a basic human level even to those who know little about the music. Those who love the music will love the book. ♦

IDEAS

Plato's Sandbox

WHO GOT EINSTEIN'S OFFICE?: ECCENTRICITY AND GENIUS AT THE INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY. By Ed Regis. *Addison-Wesley Publishing Company. 316 pp.*

Reviewed by Jonathan Weiner

A quarter of a century ago, when J. Robert Oppenheimer was the director of the Institute for Advanced Study, he decided someone

Jonathan Weiner, the author of Planet Earth, *is currently working on a book about global ecology.*

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should write a history of the place. The writer he hired, Beatrice M. Stern, talked to the institute's luminaries and dug into the files. She was permitted to read minutes of closed committee meetings that had included Albert Einstein, Niels Bohr, Kurt Gödel, John von Neumann, Oppenheimer and many other key figures in 20th-century physics and mathematics. After nine years of work, Stern turned in a two-volume manuscript of almost 800 pages, "History of the Institute for Advanced Study 1930-1950." Thereupon she was dismissed and her manuscript impounded.

A science writer who teaches philosophy at Howard University, Ed Regis began researching *Who Got Einstein's Office?*, his (unofficial) history, a few years ago. Innocently, he asked to see Stern's book, which had never been published. "The manuscript is private," said one member of the institute. "I can't give it out," said a second member; "it's not very well written." "It was a trifling matter anyway," said a third. "The lady didn't have any training in historical research. It's the story of 26 faculty members stabbing each other in the back with knives." Whatever the manuscript said, Regis concluded, "it was clear that *none of it must be allowed to get out*." So he tracked down a copy. By any ordinary standards, Regis thought, it should not have shocked or offended anyone at the institute. "That would be true, anyway, if it were the story of an institution on Planet Earth." However, the Institute for Advanced Study is not quite of this world. From its inception it has aspired to be a sort of Platonic heaven.

Plato, of course, gave his name to the philosophical view that reality as we know it through the senses is not the true reality. Truth exists on that higher plane called by Plato the world of the forms, which is apprehensible only by the mind. The Institute for Advanced Study, in Princeton, New Jersey, is devoted to a modern version of the world of the forms. It attracts pure mathematicians and theoretical physicists, people whose fields are as remote from the world of common experience and as near the realm of the eternal as it is possible to get in a scientific age. "Geologists, biologists and open-heart surgeons need not apply," Regis writes; "such people have dirty hands."



The Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey

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There are no observatories or laboratories at the institute—no telescopes, no test tubes, none of the clutter of experimental science. Nor are there any teachers, students or classrooms. There is virtually nothing to distract anyone from the life of the mind. Members do not have to worry about money (the place has been called "the Institute for Advanced Salaries"). They are not even obliged to talk to one another, and many of them don't. The campus of fields, woods and dormitories is just south of Princeton University. At any one time, some 200 people are thinking there. Most of them are temporary members, stellar young scholars on one- or two-year stints. About 25 of the 200 are the permanent members, who often choose to stay at the institute until they die. Why leave Platonic heaven?

"For a place with such ethereal pretensions," Regis says, "the institute was established on foundations that could hardly be more worldly." It owes its existence to Bamberger's, the New Jersey department store. Louis Bamberger and his sister Caroline Bamberger Fuld sold their family's store just before the stock-market crash of 1929. They decided to build a medical or dental school. As a consultant, they hired Abraham Flexner, "the hanging judge of American higher education," according to Regis. Flexner's book *The American College* was the forerunner of Allan Bloom's best seller, *The Closing of the American Mind* [see article on page 16]. His exposé of American medical schools, *The Flexner Report*, forced dozens of quack schools to fold and prodded the surviving ones to become the grueling training camps they are today.

Flexner was also famous for a private secondary school he once ran. "Mr. Flexner's School," as the place was popularly called, accepted any and all students, and inspired them to work so hard that they got into almost any college. According to Flexner, "the school operated without rules, without examinations, without records and without reports." The motto was, "No duties, only opportunities." With the Bambergers' money, Flexner saw the chance to found a sort of summit version of his old school. It would be "a society of scholars," an enclave for men and women who, as Flexner once said of one of his own mentors, "teach best by not teaching at all." Imagine what people like that could do with "no duties, only opportunities."

Bamberger and his sister were persuaded by Flexner to build this Mount Olympus instead of a dental school. And it was Flexner who, on a lovely morning in May 1932, strolled side by side with Einstein on the lawn of Christ Church College, Oxford. "Professor Einstein," he said, "I would not presume to offer you a post in this new institute, but if on reflection you decide that it would afford you the opportunities which you value, you would

be welcome on your own terms." So Einstein became the institute's first professor and its patron saint. His presence attracted other intellectual giants, and Flexner's experiment was off to a brilliant start.

The experiment has been running now for more than 50 years. Regis has written an entertaining, mixed review of its progress, drawing on published memoirs, public records and, especially, interviews with many of the junior, temporary members and Young Turks who work at the institute. The book's approach is anecdotal and loosely chronological. The first half is devoted to the giants of the early years and the second half to rising stars like the astrophysicist John Bahcall, the cosmologist Ed Witten and the maverick mathematician Stephen Wolfram.

Regis's account shows that no human institute can really be a Platonic heaven. The first faculty staged a coup and ousted Flexner from the directorship (it was only the first of several mutinies). Oppenheimer, who had headed the government's atomic-energy laboratory in Los Alamos, New Mexico, hated the institute on first sight, and several members returned the compliment. As director, he brought with him fresh air, new ideas and personal glamour but also armed guards, wiretaps and, because of his opposition to developing the hydrogen bomb, charges of disloyalty to the U.S. Government. The physicists C.N. Yang and T.D. Lee, who would win a Nobel Prize together, arrived at the institute as fast friends but left as bickering rivals. And disapproving purists there actually tried to stop the world's first electronic computer from being built on the premises.

Beatrice Stern, the official historian, must have revealed this sort of gossip by accident. Regis loves it. Quarrels on Mount Olympus make good copy. In fact, he sometimes seems more interested in clay feet and cracked pedestals than in the noble statues themselves. The reader learns that even Einstein could be petty and that Gödel was clinically paranoid and starved himself to death. The portraits of the Young Turks are much more positive. Regis gives enthusiastic and highly readable accounts of their current struggles on the frontiers of mathematics and cosmology. He is wonderful on such arcana as fractals, cellular automata, complex systems, the bubbly shape of the universe and superstring theory. ("Strings," says one pioneer, "are a piece of physics of the 21st century that fell by chance into the 20th century.") The book's spirited, popular introductions to these subjects are among the best I have read.

Regis's history grew out of an article he wrote for *Omni* magazine, and it still has the breezy style intended to keep pace with a man riding a high-speed train. This it does with never a stall. If Flexner could read *Who Got Einstein's Office?*, I think he would be more pleased than disappointed with the results of his experiment. ♦

LITERATURE

Hustling Lyricism

MORE DIE OF HEARTBREAK. By Saul Bellow. *William Morrow & Company. 335 pp.*

Reviewed by Marcus Cunliffe

The two main characters in Saul Bellow's newest novel, *More Die of Heartbreak*, are conspicuously *intellectual* in our usual understanding of that word. Benn Crader is a distinguished botanist. His nephew-confidant Kenneth Trachtenberg, who himself does a good deal of confiding, is a Russian-literature scholar. He and Uncle Benn, whose story he narrates, start joking, pondering and haranguing right away. Within the first 50 pages we hear from them, for instance, about a Charles Addams cartoon, Hitchcock movies, Sigmund Freud, plant morphology, Julius Caesar, the pianist Sviatoslav Richter, the natives of Ubangi, Carl Sagan on TV, Bruce Springsteen, Poe's reference to "hyacinth hair," Admiral Byrd's account of Antarctic isolation, Chaplin's *The Gold Rush*, Kenneth's parents as Paris expatriates, the actor John Carradine, Coleridge's albatross, the acuteness of Balzac, the mysticism of Swedenborg, and so on and so on.

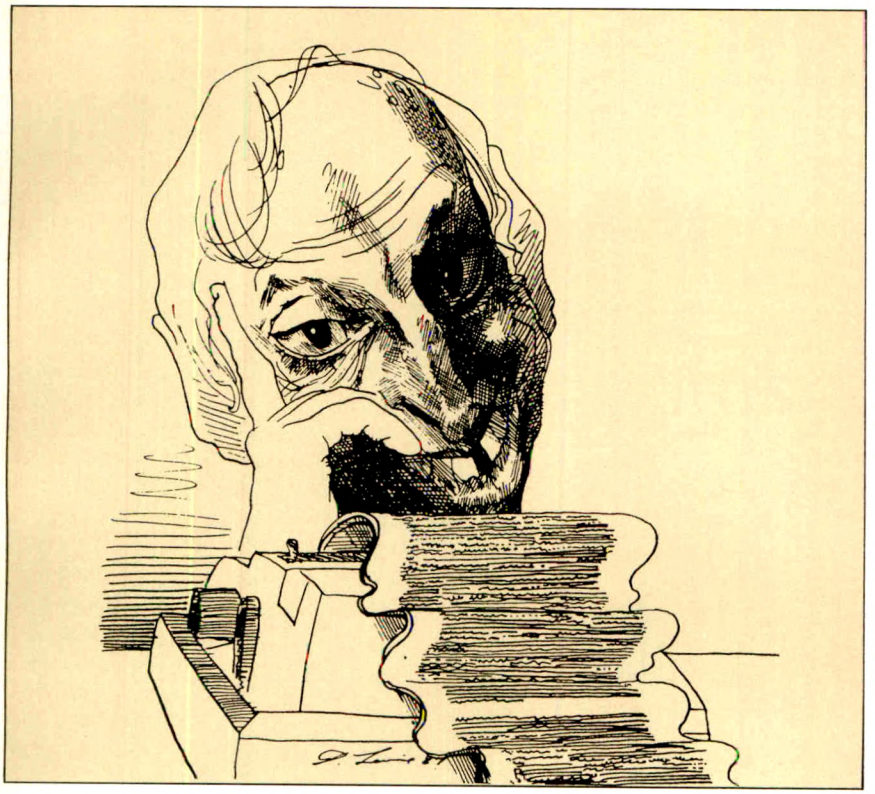
As the list suggests, the two characters do not spend all their time in lab or library. Though based in a midwestern metropolis that is presumably Bellow's own Chicago, they are often on the move—to Florida, California, Tokyo. Sometimes this motion is a matter of being on the run. Their flights of fancy can turn literal. Both men, in common with several other Bellow characters, have trouble with women. Professor Crader suffers from alluring creatures, rich and beautiful and aggressive, who want to marry him. Nephew Kenneth pines for a woman who has borne him a child but refuses matrimony. Uncle Benn tries to avoid each rendezvous with wedded destiny; Kenneth tries to set one up.

The two have other worries. In particular they feel victimized by another family member, a real-estate tycoon who has done them out of a fair share in the sale of a piece of valuable property. Vilitzer, a vilely indomitable old crook, is a splendid creation. We pay attention to him in part because he too is a vehement talker. It is not only the eggheads in Bellow who have a way with words. Even the family failures, such as Vilitzer's son Fishl, a black sheep vainly striving to be a wolf, are remarkably articulate, and often perceptive. Fishl confesses to feeling that Benn is superior to himself:

> He didn't invest his whole life in a struggle with his parents. I meet people of 80 who are still furious over their toilet training, or because their dad wouldn't take them to the ball game. Imagine such an infantile life!...I'm typical, still pursuing my father at the age of 50, hating and loving and begging him to let the prodigal come back. Now I've tried a dozen prodigal careers, each

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Novelist Saul Bellow

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more sensational than the last. Benn had it better. Without thinking twice he stepped out at a higher level.

The quantity of opinionated talkativeness puts you in mind of a typical Bernard Shaw play. But that idea has already occurred to the speedy Mr. Bellow, who remarks of Benn's father-in-law, Dr. Layamon: "He had a thin, gabby mouth, and when he wasn't speaking he sometimes wore a look of violent primness, like an actor in a Shaw play, forced briefly to listen to the other guy but thinking how he would rip into him in a minute. 'His thing is to punch the fat out of you,' said Benn."

Bellow does however distinguish between the scholars and the wised-up. Benn Crader's absorption in plant life has conferred upon him a serenity that Fishl wistfully envies. His out-of-this-world contemplativeness endows him with an intuitive authority that his nephew calls "the magics." Yet while he is at times a mage he is not always a sage. In encounters with old Vilitzer, Benn's unworldliness can seem muddled and naive. Saul Bellow is always ready to concede that, whether in ancient Babylon or modern Chicago, street-smartness will usually carry you further than erudition. Even in his own realm Uncle Benn can go comically wrong. He gains spiritual sustenance at one point by communing through a glass door with a particularly fine azalea bush—only to discover that it is an artificial creation, its flowers fashioned from silk.

Critics of Bellow have complained that there is not enough action in his tales, and not much interaction either: his characters usually prefer talking to listening, monologues to dialogues. *More Die of Heartbreak* does lay itself open to such objections. Some of the observations on the state of postmodern America are tinged with elder-statesman peevishness. Not every bit of conversational epigram works. The book's title, for example, comes from a Benn Crader remark that heartbreak causes more deaths than atomic radiation. Well, true in general, perhaps; but in any case, not really apropos, since the Crader-Vilitzer clan is a pretty resilient bunch. Grumblers might say Bellow gives us the same mixture as before, from *Seize the Day*, *Henderson the Rain King*, *Herzog*, *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, *The Dean's December*.

That may be so. But what a mixture! Though he is very much his own person, Bellow's fiction has something of the elegance, felicity, exactness and tartness of Vladimir Nabokov, or of John Updike at his best. *More Die of Heartbreak* moves unhurriedly, yet it does build up a carefully developed momentum. As a novel of ideas it sparkles. Crader nicely describes himself as "a phoenix who runs after arsonists." Bellow has, too, a sharp relish for the skulduggeries of the top-echelon rascals, the princes of "dirty realism." If this is the mixture as before, I for one am grateful and delighted; for Bellow himself is a marvelous blend of mage and wise guy, and his newest book has that special Bellovian quality of hustling lyricism. ♦

BIOGRAPHY

The Ultimate Individualist

THOREAU: A LIFE OF THE MIND. By Robert D. Richardson Jr. *University of California Press. 455 pp.*

Reviewed by Karl Hess

By the time Henry David Thoreau started to build his cabin at Walden Pond in 1845, the newly laid rails of a railroad line could be seen from virtually every part of the property. To the land's owner, Ralph Waldo Emerson, the coming

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of the railroad was a disaster of civilization intruding harshly on his and his friends' various dreams of communal life genteelly isolated from the raging world of industrial capitalism. To the people who rode the train, it was pure progress. The Concord-to-Boston fare was only 50 cents, a third cheaper than the stagecoach and four times as fast.

More than the railroad had come to Concord. Adam Smith had arrived also. And who was there to welcome him? Damned if it wasn't Henry David himself!

Thanks to this "intellectual biography" of the one American literary figure who seems to excite every kind of antiauthoritarian radicalism—left, right, up, down and sideways—I now feel comfortable in claiming Thoreau wholly for the side of liberty. He was not a socialist or any other kind of collectivist or even a communalist. He was not a believer in coercion, even if for good causes. He would not serve society. He did not respect the authority of civil government. He did not even believe in the divine right of Christianity. His entire life was devoted to the seamless perfection of individual liberty and, specifically, liberty for the individual who was Thoreau. All of this becomes marvelously clear in Robert D. Richardson Jr.'s *Thoreau: A Life of the Mind*.

Unlike an ordinary biography, this one concentrates on what Thoreau was thinking about, what he was reading and what arguments he was making publicly and privately throughout his life. And it puts all of this in the intimate context of what he was doing, who he was seeing and how he was making his living at every step of the way. If I had to choose a single volume to familiarize someone with Thoreau, I would select this one.

Richardson, a professor of English at the University of Denver, sees the first chapter of Thoreau's seminal book, *Walden, or Life in the Woods* (1854), which is devoted to domestic economy, as a response to the new economics of Adam Smith, whose *Wealth of Nations* had been published in 1776. Except for disagreement over mass consumption and the desirability of the division of labor, Thoreau's was a very sympathetic response. "Smith's basic terms," Richardson writes, "provide many of [*Walden*'s] main topics," and "much of his opening chapter is an application of Smith's ideas and terminology to the individual case."

And there, as a matter of fact, arose Thoreau's main disagreements with Smith. Smith was interested in the production of things; Thoreau, in the production of his own individual freedom to be left alone. He preferred the sort of individualistic, nondivided labor that can keep a person an independent producer. But he emphatically agreed with Smith that productive labor is the absolute requirement of wealth and, by inference, liberty from imperial authority. In his own work as a pencil maker, Thoreau was often eagerly engaged in improving production techniques—not just to make more pencils but to more equitably balance the time spent observing nature, walking in the woods and thinking about things.

Thoreau's "portable" skills other than pencil making were teaching and surveying, both ventures in which he could produce freedom of personal action by being, in effect, a one-man operation. His notion of an ideal venture was one in which you "oversee all the details yourself in person: to be at once pilot and captain, and owner and underwriter." Was there ever a more wonderfully individualistic statement of one possibility of laissez-faire capitalism? A modern Thoreau, it could be argued, would be an entrepreneur, never a company man.

Even in his approach to nature, Thoreau is more the persistent, individualistic, free-thinking scientist than an awestruck worshipper of nature freed from human intelligence. As Richardson sums up Thoreau's feelings about humans in nature and the nature of humans: "The savage may have the place of honor inside the civilized person, but both are necessary to true integrity." While Thoreau revered the wild, he revered his own intelligence as much and was as interested in understanding his environment as in living peacefully in it.

Thoreau's major involvements with wholly social activities were in the matter of slavery and in opposition to the annexation of Texas and the subsequent war with Mexico. He was, for a time, an impassioned supporter of the abolitionist John Brown, even (briefly and uncharacteristically) supporting his armed resistance.

But overall, his every "reformist" notion was centered on himself and not on society. Richardson puts it this way:

> Thoreau's going to live
> at Walden seems clearly
> intended as the self-reliant



Walden Pond, Concord, Massachusetts

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> individual's answer to the challenge posed by utopian communes....Thoreau's stay at Walden was the ultimate reform commune, reduced, for purposes of emphasis, to the simplest possible constituent unit, the self.

Thoreau's life is so magnificently idiosyncratic that only a firm believer in a free society can accept it without affront. He didn't like mass-production society or an emphasis on consumption. He did not, however, inaugurate a lobbying effort to pass a law against either. He simply stopped being part of the one or succumbing to the other.

Thoreau rejected the notion of servile obedience to the state, but he harmed no one nor did he infringe on anyone's freedom. He sought neither the safety nor the security of state protection. And who would pass a law to make him declare his unwilling allegiance?

His keen view of the state has, of course, endeared him to many radicals. But his insistence on nonviolent resistance surely turns off leftist hotheads, while his insistence on the primacy of the individual against any and all institutions surely turns off rightist seekers of ordered authority.

Incidentally, all of Richardson's painstaking research failed to turn up any evidence of the epic, aphoristic encounter between Thoreau and Emerson while Thoreau spent his famous night in jail for refusing to pay a tax. (Emerson: "What are you doing in there?" Thoreau: "What are you doing out there?") Never mind, Thoreau did expand on the theme later and in pretty much the same terms.

Thoreau's feeling about the primacy of the individual seems to have been a lifelong disposition. Richardson describes his very first public lecture, which he prepared at Emerson's urging, in 1838:

> Starting with the good Aristotelian position that "man was made for society," Thoreau wondered if the time-honored words had not "come to stand for another thing," almost the opposite of the original intent, making it necessary "in order to preserve its significance, to write it anew." Perhaps, he argued, it should be put "Society was made for Man."...His point here was not a fractious denial of the importance of social organizations but simply a reminder to his listeners that society was only a means to the end of the individual self-fulfillment, and not the other way around.

Earlier, in college, he had written that "the fear of displeasing the world ought not, in the least, to influence my actions." And he also wrote that the indispensable minimum requirement for what a man should do is that "he may not impose on his fellows."

Fluent in several languages, Thoreau derived much of his thinking from the writings of the German Enlightenment and from Greek, Hindu and Chinese religious writings. Although not a strident critic of Christianity, he did disassociate himself from it.

There is a passage from *Walden* that speaks to this:

> I have been as sincere a worshipper of Aurora as the Greeks. I got up early and bathed in the pond; that was a religious exercise, and one of the best things which I did. They say that characters were engraven on the bathing tub of King Tching-chang to this effect: "Renew thyself completely each day; do it again and again, and forever again." I can understand that.

Richardson refers to this as evidence of "Thoreau's great awakening, but it is an awakening to daily renewal, not to eternal redemption."

Thoreau died on the morning of May 6, 1862. Outside, as Richardson concludes his grand work on this glorious, gritty man, "the earliest apple trees began to leaf and show green, just as they do every year on this day." ♦

LAW

Chief Justice

THE SUPREME COURT: HOW IT WAS, HOW IT IS. By William H. Rehnquist. *William Morrow & Company. 338 pp.*

Reviewed by Philip B. Kurland

Active Supreme Court justices are not wont to write books. There have been some exceptions, such as William O. Douglas, of recent memory, and Joseph Story, of an earlier age. Many justices have come to the Court with extensive bibliographies to their credit, especially those with professorial backgrounds. And, at least through this century, many justices have delivered prestigious lectures that have been published between hard covers. In more recent days, the justices have entered the lists through lectures and law-review articles directed to controversies that have swirled about their opinions.

It may seem strange that today's justices, who have inadequate time to write their own opinions, can nevertheless find time for these extrajudicial compositions. It is, however, probably getting more difficult for them to sit quietly in the face of comments of law professors, law students and those who were called, by Justice Felix Frankfurter, "newspaper calumnists." And the justices' suffering becomes more acute as the Supreme Court becomes more politicized.

A professor at the University of Chicago Law School, Philip B. Kurland is coeditor of The Founders' Constitution.

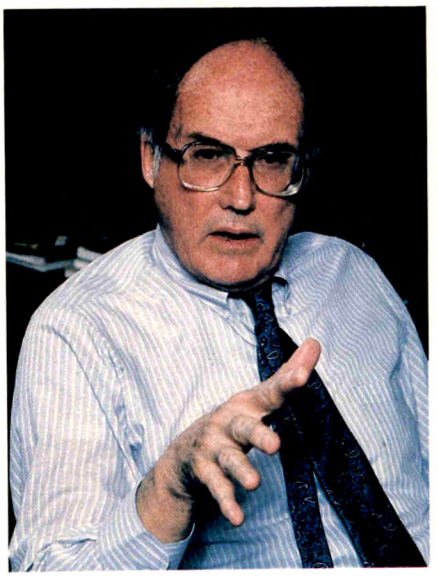
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With *The Supreme Court: How It Was, How It Is*, William H. Rehnquist now shares with early-19th-century Justice John Marshall the distinction of being a chief justice of the United States who has produced a book during his judicial tenure. Unlike Marshall's multivolume life of George Washington, Rehnquist's book has the very real merit of being generally well written, plain-spoken and accurate.

The book serves its stated intention well. Only occasionally does the book reveal the judicial philosophy of its author, a philosophy that generally would diminish national-government authority except where it is exercised by the executive branch. The book introduces the literate layman to a concise history of the Court and the justices who have played prominent roles. Rehnquist carries the story only up to the appointment of Associate Justice William Brennan in 1956, thereby avoiding comment on any justice with whom he sits or has sat. His history is supplemented by a description of how the present Court dispatches its business.

Much of the book's charm derives from the folksy autobiographical passages centering on some of the events of Rehnquist's clerkship with Associate Justice Robert Jackson in the early 1950s. The Supreme Court case arising from the temporary seizure of the steel mills by President Harry Truman during a strike in 1952, a case in which Jackson wrote an opinion still regarded as the best judicial analysis of the division of authority between Congress and the President, is fully detailed.

The book is clearly intended to introduce neophytes into the arcane behavior and procedures of the U.S. Supreme Court. But it will surely number among its readers even veteran Court watchers, for anything a justice has to say can be revealing of some of his attitudes toward the institution he serves and the tasks he performs. Thus Chief Justice Rehnquist tells us: "Every time a claim of constitutional right is asserted by an individual or a group against a legislative act, the principle of majority rule and self-government is placed on one side of the judicial scale, and the principle of the individual right is placed on the other side of the scale. The function of the Supreme Court is, indeed, to hold the balance true between these weights in the scale, and not to consciously elevate one at the expense of the other." The imagery of Leviathan on one side of the scale and an individual on the other being brought into balance may be a little hard to contemplate. But then Rehnquist gives a very broad definition of "civil liberty" as "a claim that an individual has against the government."



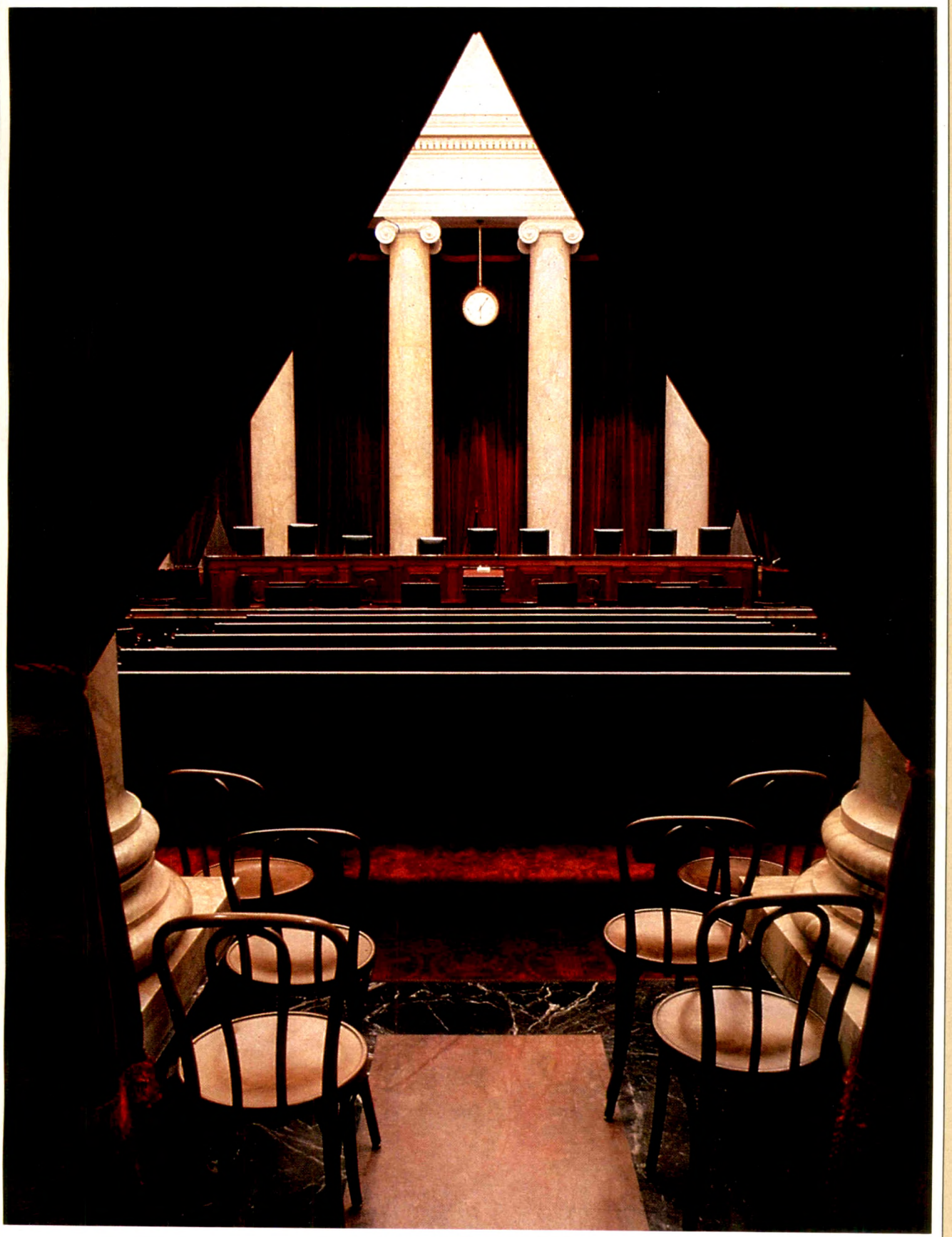
Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist

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Rehnquist is quite tolerant of the notion of presidential "Court-packing," at least when it is subject to the constitutional safeguard of Senate advice and consent: "A President who sets out to pack the Court does nothing more than seek to appoint people to the Court who are sympathetic to his political or philosophical principles." He sees the method of appointment as giving the citizenry an indirect voice in selecting an otherwise politically irresponsible, undemocratic if not antidemocratic, branch of government. "When a vacancy occurs on the Court, it is entirely appropriate that that vacancy be filled by the President, responsible to a national constituency, as advised by the Senate, whose members are responsible to regional constituencies. Thus, public opinion has some say in who shall become judges of the Supreme Court."

The chief justice quotes former Justice Louis Brandeis's proposition that the Court retains the respect of the populace, which is essential to its function, because "we do our own work." Rehnquist still expects the same acclaim and support for the Court, although he has substantially modified the Brandeis dictum: "Though the number of law clerks has increased with the years, the individual justices still continue to do a great deal more of their 'own work' than do their counterparts in the other branches of government." But what Rehnquist reveals of the inner workings of the Court shows an extraordinarily large role for the clerks both in the preliminary process by which the Court chooses the cases it will decide, and in writing the opinions that become the "law of the land."

This book deserves and will surely receive the attentions of a wide audience. It is a prime text for use in secondary-school and college courses. Lawyers and law students will want the information it conveys about how the Court functions behind the velvet curtains. Lawyers and laymen alike will enjoy a painless history lesson, well-told tales spiced with personal anecdotes and insights. Most readers will find a different personality from the austere image of the chief justice the photographers and cartoonists have given us. Perhaps this small volume by the man who presides over the most powerful judicial body in the free world will seduce a wider audience for the Court and not leave it to the clique of cranky critics who would impose their own judgments on the Court's work. ♦

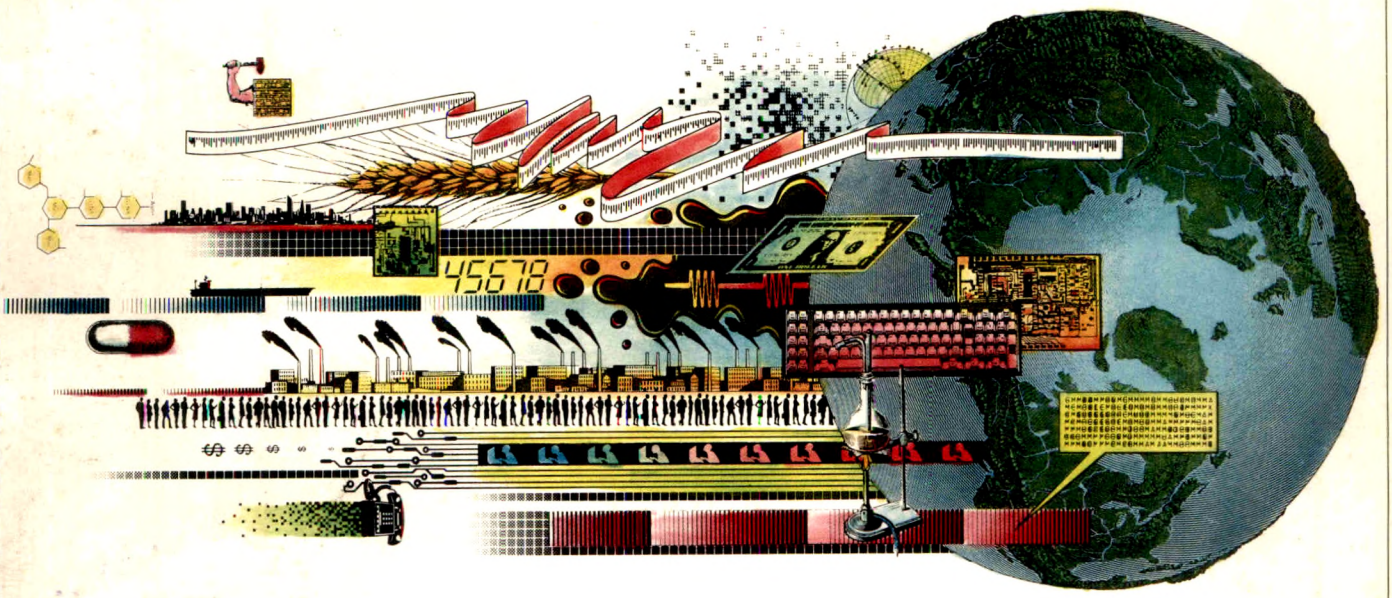


Inside the U.S. Supreme Court

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THE AMERICAN REVIEW

3/1988



THE WORLD IN 2013
By Daniel Bell

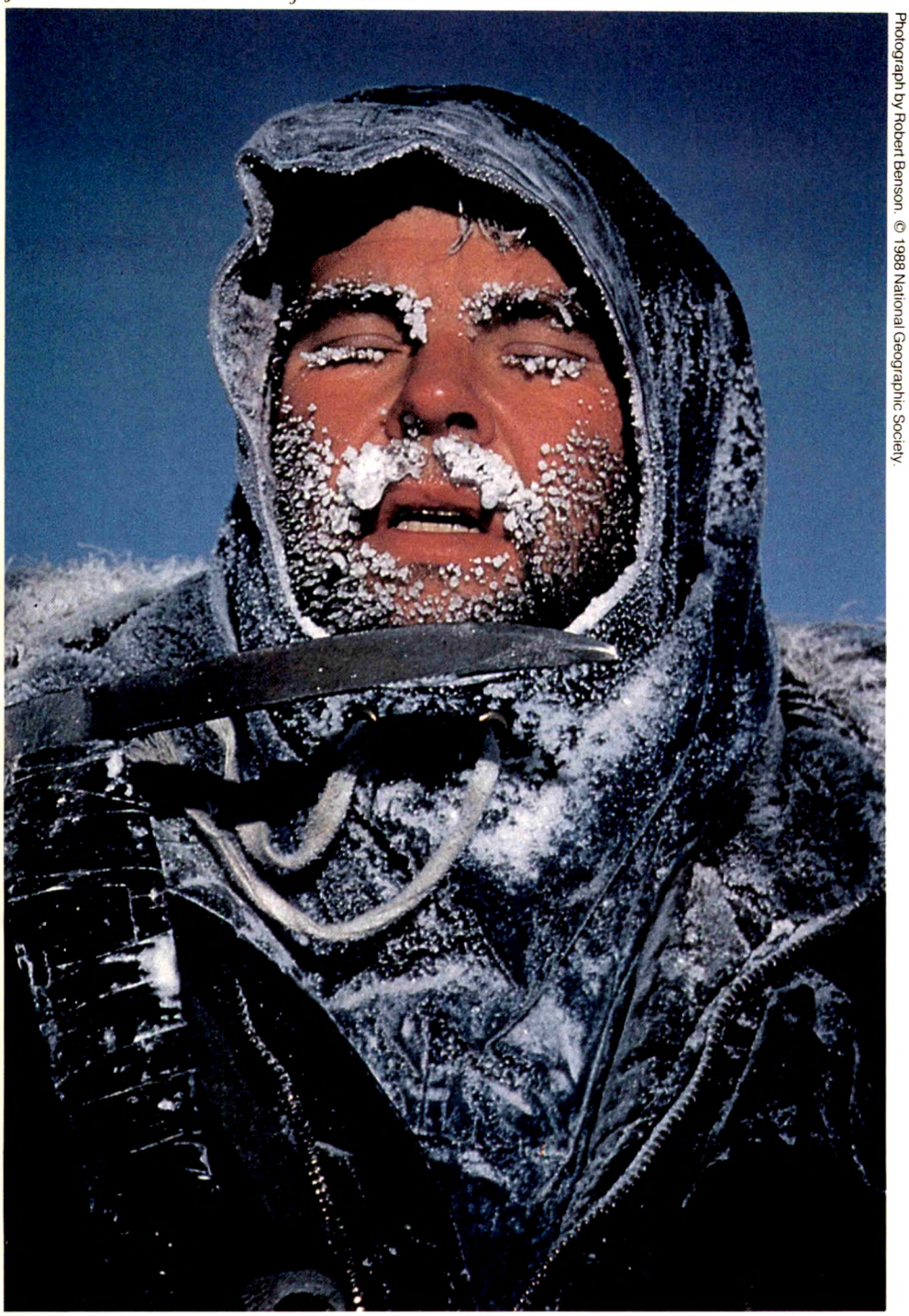
AMERICAN POLITICS IN A PRESIDENTIAL YEAR

THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT VIRUSES

HISPANIC ART

A Century of Exploration

Frost encrusts the face and ice axe of Thomas Abercrombie, a photographer for the National Geographic Society on an assignment at the coldest place on Earth—the South Pole. The society, which celebrates its centennial in 1988, is best known for the color photography of its monthly magazine, National Geographic. *Based in Washington, D.C., the society's original purpose was to "diffuse geographic knowledge" by sponsoring scientific expeditions to the ends of the globe: its first grant supported Robert Peary's pioneering voyage to the North Pole. In recent years, National Geographic has soared to probe the atmosphere and plunged to the sea floor to examine the remains of the* Titanic.



Photograph by Robert Benson. © 1988 National Geographic Society.

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COVER: *How will the world change economically and socially in the next 25 years?* *See article, page 2.* *Illustration by John Pack.*

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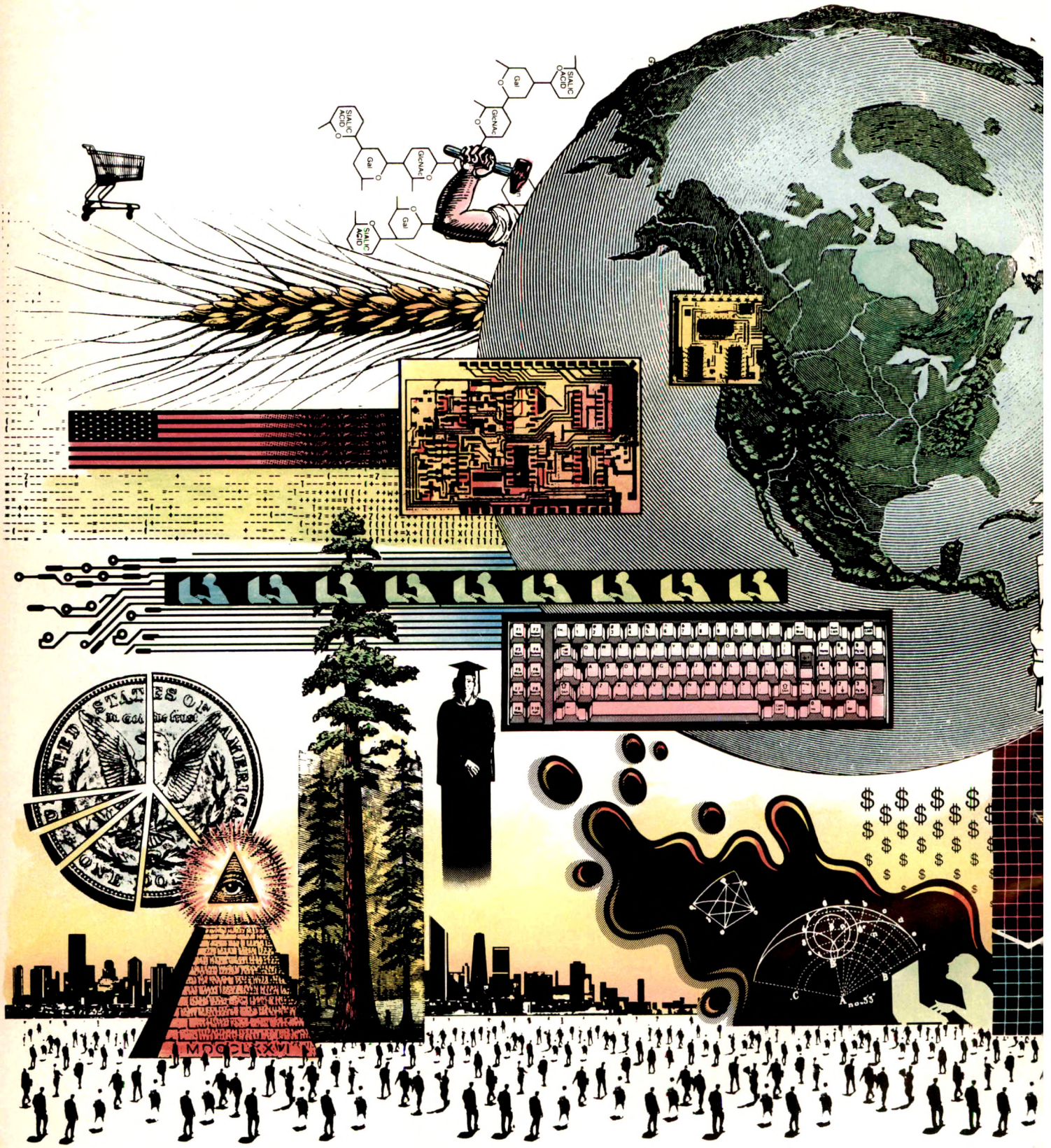
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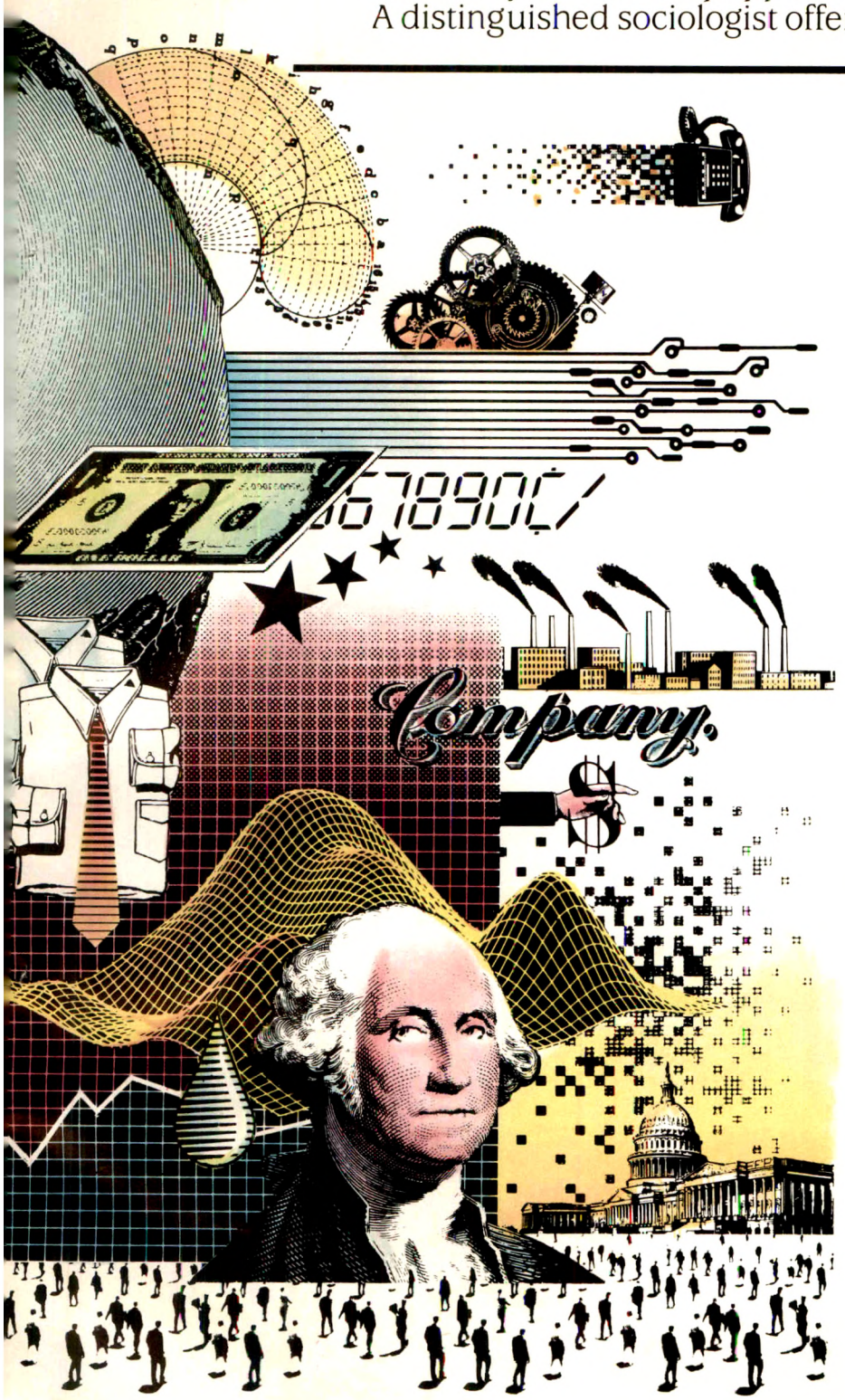
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THE WORLD IN 2013

Are today's nations equipped to handle global problems? A distinguished sociologist offers some provocative views.



Illustrations by John Pack

By Daniel Bell

What will the world be like in the 21st century? Many futurists speak of far-fetched scientific advances that reflect dreams rather than realistic possibilities. Less sanguine observers merely project ongoing trends—today's birthrates, for instance—as inexorably causing tomorrow's problems. Both underestimate the difficulties of predicting the future, but it is true that the world is undergoing dramatic changes as we enter what Daniel Bell has called a "postindustrial society." In this article Bell, one of America's most distinguished sociologists, considers changes both in world society and in the United States. He examines the increasing global links in trade, communications and finance, and suggests what these developments augur for the world 25 years from now, in the year 2013.

A professor of social sciences at Harvard University, Daniel Bell currently is a visiting professor at Cambridge University. He is the author of many books, including The Coming of the Post-Industrial Society *and* The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism.

Can we predict the future? If we mean by that the exact configuration of world society, or even of the United States in 2013, not likely. The imponderables are primarily the political-ideological currents that are too complex and not easily charted.

Consider: few analysts before World War II predicted the collapse of the old colonial systems—the British, French, Dutch empires—and the rapid emergence of the Third World and the vast number of new nations that are today rele-

Reprinted by permission of *Daedalus*, Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Summer 1987, Vol. 116, No. 3, Cambridge, Massachusetts. © 1987 by Daniel Bell.

vant actors on the world scene. Few writers a decade ago predicted the transformation of Middle Eastern politics, or the use of terrorism as an instrument of national policy. The world society is like a set of giant mobiles, shifting in uneasy balances in accordance with the winds of change, but the exact configurations are difficult to capture—especially for 25 years from now.

Presumably there are a few constants. Some individuals will take trends—demographic, resources, economic—and project these. In theory, we ought to know how many people will be on the Earth in the year 2013, or what the state of our resources may be.

But consider the estimates of the U.S. population. Twenty-five years ago demographers projected a population of anywhere between 300 and 320 million by the year 2000, taking the baby boom of the post-World War II years as the norm. That birthrate, however, began to drop off. Today, it is more likely that the U.S. population will be approximately 265 million by the year 2000. World population, which has been growing rapidly, is already beyond the "point of inflection" and is tapering off in its rate of growth.

What, then, is it possible to forecast? Within a limited perspective one may be able to identify *basic structural frameworks* that are emerging, that form the matrix of people's lives. In the past, an obvious one was the change from an agrarian to an industrial society. At the turn of this century, almost half the population of the United States (the grandparents of many persons still alive) were born on farms; one-third of the labor force worked on farms. Today fewer than four percent of the labor force work on farms, and many of these people do not make their living exclusively from farming. The major reason for the change was the huge increase in agricultural productivity during World War II and after with the introduction of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. As a result, about 25 million persons left the farms. Sharecropping was virtually eliminated, and blacks moved north into central cities. One can see how a small "social system" of interlinked changes works.

What can one say about the world and the United States in 2013? Though an effort at forecasting, this essay is still a cautionary tale in the face of the technological wizardry that has us hurtling into the future without a clear sense of the recalcitrances of people and the constraints of global institutions.

THE SHIFT TO THE PACIFIC RIM

The major question is whether, by the year 2013, the Pacific Basin will be the center of economic power. If so, the East Asian countries led by Japan and China, the Southeast Asian nations, and the United States and the Soviet Union, will be the major economic players in the world.

This is a change of extraordinary historical proportions. Historically, Europe has been the center of economic development and of civilization. The initial matrix was the Mediterranean Basin. After the 17th century, the economic center shifted to the Atlantic rim and the northern-European countries. Since 1970 the shift has been to the Pacific. Today the great expansion in U.S. trade is with the Pacific Rim countries.

If there is an economic shift, which is probable, will there also be a political shift? And, if so, is it possible for a country to be a major political power without also, in time, becoming a major military power? Unlikely. The major "line of economic force" is from Japan to Australia. Japan has few natural resources and produces little food of its own. Australia has large deposits of coal and uranium; it is a major granary.

The old division of labor, which shaped the world economy for 200 years from 1780 to 1980, created a set of core manufacturing societies (the United Kingdom and Germany, then the United States, then the Soviet Union and Japan), together with a periphery of countries, principally in the Third World, that provided raw materials and primary products for the core countries. This is now breaking up and no simple, single pattern has emerged. Basic industrial manufacturing of standardized mass-production goods is being "pulled out" of the Western world and located in East Asia and, to a lesser extent, in Brazil and the Mexican-Caribbean region.

The United States and Japan have become postindustrial societies; the predominant parts of their economies are the service and high-tech sectors. By 1990, almost 75 percent of the U.S. labor force will be in services. The word *services* conjures up images of fast-food, low-wage employment. This is misleading. The major job areas are financial services, professional and design services, human services (health, education and social services) and, at the low end of the scale, personal services. The core of the postindustrial society lies in its professional and technical services.

There are, in effect, three kinds of manufacturing: first, a materials-based, standardized, low value-added operation in which labor costs are important; second, a flexible batch-production, specialized and customized, high value-added type of production; third, information-based industries (computers, telecommunications, scientific instruments, pharmaceuticals).

In the new manufacturing, the proportion of raw materials steadily diminishes as a percentage of costs. In the advanced countries, the basic change is a move away from heavy, materials-intensive products and processes: forty kilograms of optical fibers in a cable can transmit as many messages as one ton of copper wire. Raw materials diminish in importance, not only because of miniaturization (e.g., computer chips) and the reduction of energy requirements, but also because of the revolution in materials science.

A NEW WORLD MONETARY SYSTEM

If the first change is in the multiple centers of manufacturing, the second is in the centers of finance: the United States has become a headquarters economy for large parts of the world. London, halfway between New York

In the new manufacturing, raw materials will diminish in importance, not only because of miniaturization and the reduction of energy requirements, but also because of the revolution in materials science.

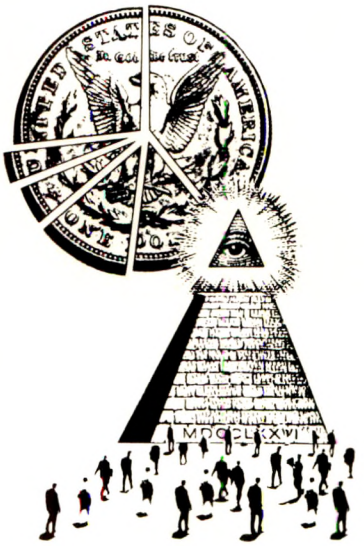
and Tokyo (in time), is becoming a financial-services node.

The chief point is the *internationalization of capital*—a state of affairs symbolized by the vast hoard of "stateless" Eurodollars (dollars held by banks and countries outside the United States) that are not subject to U.S. financial regulation. The existence of this vast hoard means that banking and corporate groups can direct their capital in search of higher returns, even when such action goes against the domestic interests of individual countries. Few countries, if any, are able to control their own currency. This is a loss of one of the main levers of power and influence.

What kind of international monetary system will now come into operation? From the end of World War II until the mid-1970s we had the Bretton Woods system: a gold-backed, dollar-based set of exchange rates. This was broken when the United States "exported" its inflation to the rest of the world. When France began demanding gold instead of dollars, the United States reneged, breaking the link. Gold soared and the dollar alone became the international reserve currency, creating wild swings in prices for most countries.

Some new international monetary systems will have to emerge to form the backbone of the new international economy. Gold is a simple solution: prices are denominated in gold; gold is fungible. Yet, it is also subject to manipulation; it cannot function easily as an independent standard outside political controls. Also, gold is largely unavailable to most of the smaller, less-developed countries.

Two other possibilities: a "basket" of major currencies or a "basket of commodities" in which countries deposit and draw credits for them, and an international banking system that



would function much as the Federal Reserve does in the United States, as a supercontrol for the national central banks.

All this may seem esoteric; yet, without some new international structural arrangement, the world economy will remain erratic and unstable. A new monetary system does not rule out instabilities, but makes these more manageable within national contexts.

Two further points:

Though we see the free movement of capital internationally, raw-material prices—especially for metals—have been depressed, and may remain so until the end of the century, rising only slowly, thereby limiting the ability of many countries (particularly in Africa) to build a capital base for their own development.

The "hidden iceberg." Though capital is able to move freely, most people do not. If jobs are being dispersed around the world, will people follow the jobs?

TECHNOLOGICAL REVOLUTION

By 2013 the third technological revolution—the joining of computers and telecommunications (image television, voice telephone, data-information computers, text facsimile) into a single yet differentiated system, that of the "wired nation" and even the "world society"—will have matured.

The first technological revolution, 200 years ago, was the application of steam power to transportation (railroads, steamships), to mining and to machine production in factories. The second technological revolution, 100 years ago, depended upon the spread of electricity (coded messages on wires, telegraph and telephone; lighting; power for turbines and elevators, allowing construction of skyscrapers) and the advancement of chemistry, which for the first time allowed men to make products outside nature (synthetics, petrochemical products, plastics).

The third technological revolution will be aided by natural-language communications, machine translation and certain expert systems. We will have widespread robotics, electronic mail and messages, information retrieval on call, services organized through interactive terminals. The range of possible and probable changes is enormous.

This revolution will result in the elimination of geography as a controlling variable. To illustrate consider the changing nature of markets.

Historically, a market was a place where roads crossed, rivers crossed: merchants and caravans stopped en route, farmers brought their food, artisans their skills. In the new economy this is no longer true. Take the spot oil

market. It is called "the Rotterdam market" because tankers with capacities above their contracted deliveries would come to Rotterdam to sell extra oil "on the spot." There, brokers would make their deals and reroute the tankers to the new destinations. The market is no longer in Rotterdam. Where is it? Everywhere. It is a telex-radio-computer network linking brokers all around the world and redirecting ships on the high seas to new destinations.

Work increasingly is becoming detached from place, operations from their central headquarters. Communications networks, with bursts of data speeding thousands of kilometers, mean the breakup of old geographical habits and locations. Thus we see a change of extraordinary historical and sociological importance—the change in the nature of markets from "places" to "networks."

Yet the realization of these technological possibilities may be thwarted by two perhaps intractable difficulties. Most people have tended to focus on problems related to resources (food, energy, water, metals and minerals). I think their fears are somewhat misplaced. There are, however, two structural problems that constitute threatening time bombs.

WHITHER THE NATION-STATE?

Time Bomb 1: Polity. We have today an international economy, heavily interdependent. Yet while the international economy is increasingly integrated, many polities are fragmenting. The process is accordionlike, expanding and contracting at particular moments. In Belgium the fragmentation is linguistic and national; in Canada it is linguistic; in Northern Ireland it is religious; in Spain it is based on local nationalism; in Nigeria it is tribal. In any of these nations the divisions follow the historic "fault lines" of these countries. But because it seems to be happening in so many different places, one ought to suspect a common underlying problem. It is, I believe, this: *the nation-state is becoming too small for the big problems of life, and too big for the small problems of life.*

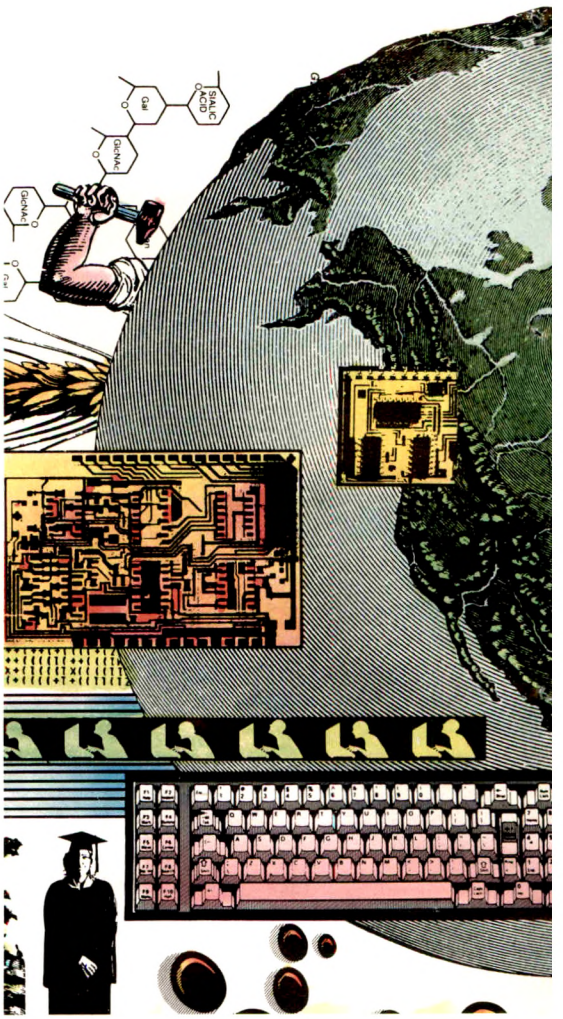
The nation-state is too small for the big problems because there are no effective international mechanisms to deal with the problems of capital flows, commodity imbalances, the loss of jobs and the several demographic tidal waves that will be developing in the next 20 years. But it is too big for the small problems because the flow of power to a national political center means that the nation-state becomes increasingly unresponsive to the variety and diversity of local needs, and local political centers lose the ability to effectively control resources and make their own decisions.

A historical retrospect: what was the New Deal of Franklin D. Roosevelt? For some it was "creeping socialism," for others it was "saving capitalism." Perhaps the central point is that it was a response to a change in scale. From 1900 to 1930, there was a growth in national markets and in national corporations. But the effective economic and countervailing power remained in the hands of the states. The New Deal created effective national mechanisms to deal with national economic problems: a Securities and Exchange Commission to regulate financial markets and a Social Security system to provide a safety net in old age.

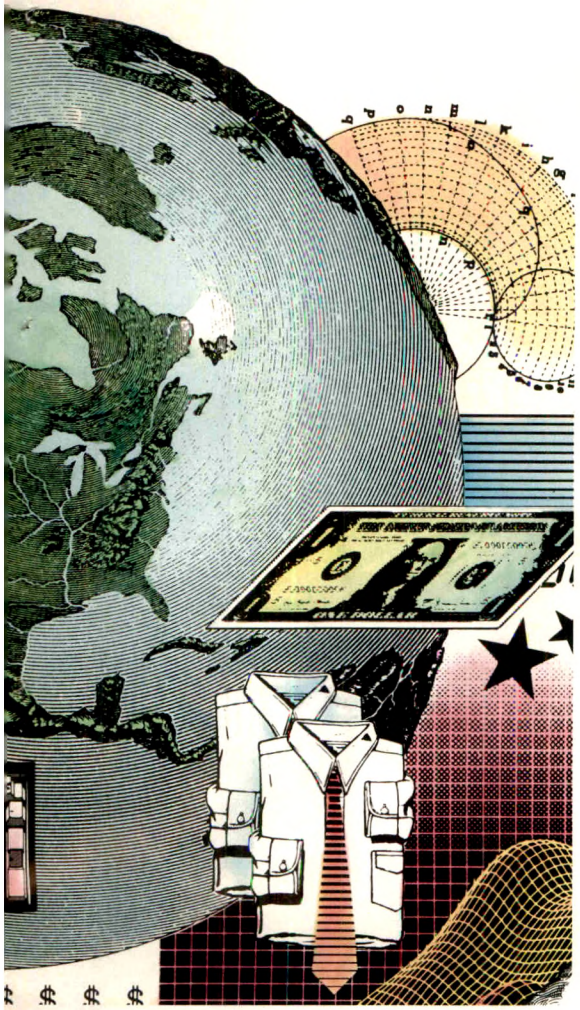
There is no such matching of scales today. There are few, if any, effective international economic or coordinating agencies to match international economic power. And given the multiplication of national sovereignties as a result of the breakup of the old colonial system, the nation-state has become increasingly ineffective in coping with economic problems. So we see international economic integration and national political fragmentation.

Time Bomb 2: Demography. World population today is about 5000 million persons. Given present projections, it could double in 40 years, to about 10,000 million. Can we feed all these people? Will there be sufficient jobs? These are the ways the questions are usually put. I suggest that both the estimates and the questions are misplaced.

One should say, first, that we have to disaggregate growth figures. In Europe there will probably be an absolute decline in population. This is already happening in West Germany



We have today an international economy, heavily interdependent. Thus, the nation-state is becoming too small for the big problems of life, and too big for the small problems of life.



and in Hungary, and will soon occur in a few other countries. In Africa, and to a lesser extent in Latin America, populations are still surging ahead. The problem in these countries derives less from total numbers—in Africa the ratio of people to land available for cultivation is still manageable—than from the fact of urbanization, the crowding into cities.

It is in the Third World cities that there is likely to be a problem with the growth of the megalopolis: Mexico City (30 million by the year 2000); Shanghai (25 million); Bombay and Jakarta (about 17 million each). In these cities the problems of infrastructure and services will be severe, as they now are in Cairo and Calcutta.

Still, even that is not the main time bomb. It is this: the widening gap between the age cohorts in different parts of the world. In all of Africa, young people under 15 years of age constitute between 40 and 50 percent of the population. In almost all of Latin America—in particular, in Central America and the Caribbean—young persons make up about 40 percent of the population; in most of Asia, between 30 and 40 percent; in the United States and Canada, about 22 percent. With the exception of Ireland, in Europe this proportion of young people is about 20 percent or below.

These population imbalances mean that, in the next 20 years, we will see demographic tidal waves sweeping the world. In the heavily weighted countries, this will mean more than a doubling of the rates of entry into the labor forces.

THE DEMAND FOR RESOURCES

Contrary to received and popular opinion, resources—meaning food, water, energy, metals and minerals, forests and wetlands, the ozone problem—are not crucial shock areas, or even major constraints. The simple point is that all the estimates are based on projections that overestimate the demand side and are often wildly wrong on the supply side.

Take one example as indicative of the prevailing logic and its shortcomings. The Club of Rome in 1973 predicted the early exhaustion of the world supply of copper. Within a few years, however, the price of copper doubled. At that high price, Israel, Panama and Zaire opened long-dormant mines. Also, with copper at a high price, users began to substitute plastic for copper tubing and to find other substitute materials, such as optical fibers. There is today a glut of copper. Thus the cautionary tale.

Food. Ten years ago there were only about five major exporters of cereals and grains: the United States, Canada, Australia, Argentina and, marginally, one or two other countries. Today, almost every country in the world is just about self-sufficient in food, and seeking export markets. India is a prime example. The only major importer of grains today is the Soviet Union, and that too may change.

Two points: Global 2000, the report on worldwide trends requested by President Carter, concluded that the world demand for food would increase steadily for 20 years, that food production would fall in the developed countries, that real food prices would double. This was in 1980. But global food production has increased everywhere, particularly in the United States. Today we have a worldwide glut.

Energy. Whether we will "run out" of oil by the year 2013 is problematic. Present projections indicate an oil crisis in the early to mid-1990s. By the year 2013, there will be new technologies on the horizon: light-emitting diodes, which will replace light bulbs and traffic lights, and superconductivity, which will enlarge power grids, possibly through windmills and solar panels.

Water. A growing problem, especially in the United States, but largely a problem because of waste and mismanagement and pollution. Again, not a resource problem primarily, but an economic and political one: the need for better management of scarce resources.

Can one draw an integral, coherent picture of the world in 2013? Given simply the political imponderables sketched here, the answer is no. But if one wishes to concentrate on the principal problems, the most explicit ones would be the demographic, age-cohort imbalances. The most diffuse yet crucial one would be political fragmentation. Of the structural changes, the rise of the Pacific Rim is clearly the major change in the offing, and it is of extraordinary historic and economic importance.

THE UNITED STATES IN 2013

The outlines of the United States in 2013, and its problems, can already be seen from the chiaroscuro sketch of the world in 2013. Americans are not immune to the shocks of the world society. In fact, they are ever more vulnerable—and that is the most obvious starting point. Most of the earnings of the major corporations depend on investments and sales abroad; large

If there is a widespread consensus in Western societies, it is on the idea that individual and local community choice in as many matters as possible is a desirable value.

amounts of foreign capital are now invested in the United States, inextricable from domestic capital; the capital markets are international; increasingly, most U.S. enterprises abroad are not multinational but joint ventures with foreign companies.

Geographically, the United States is becoming a bicoastal economy. The 16 coastal states contain 42 percent of the nation's population today. In the 1980s, this grouping accounted for 70 percent of the real growth in wages and partnership income.

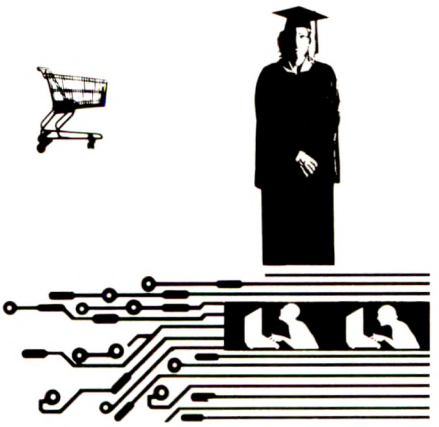
This framework will continue: in effect, the midwestern states may be stuck in an economic "long wave" and sit in the trough. The reasons are obvious: the decline of standard manufacturing, of farming and of energy.

Think of it, however, in more historic terms. Almost all major cities are located near water, since water was the basis of bulk transportation and of roads that circumvented mountains. (Can one think of any major city not located on an ocean, lake or river?) The location of cities in an industrial society was determined by an interplay of water transport and resources.

Look at the new patterns. Route 128, a highway around Boston, with its high-tech firms, and the software firms still in the city center, close to the universities. Silicon Valley, stretching from San Francisco to San Jose. In New Jersey, Route 1, from Newark to Trenton, with Princeton at its center, is one of the fastest-growing regions in the United States.

To the extent that the new communications technology makes interaction easier and less costly, we may also see the breakup of existing work patterns (e.g., more people working part-time at home, new patterns of hourly work). The idea of "cottage industries" is too slick and simple. There will be many more-variegated patterns.

New England has been the model



of transition. Historically, it was a light-manufacturing center, basically producing textiles and shoes, but these industries are lost. Today it has become a major high-tech center. Can other regions do the same? That depends on the world economy and international political stability. There are huge potential markets for the new technologies.

The need now is for effective decentralization. Without it, the United States in the year 2013 will be in disarray. Successive administrations, from Nixon to Reagan, have talked of returning functions to the states and counties. But what sense does this make? The United States is a nation of 50 states. In Texas, the distance between Brownsville in the south and Amarillo in the northwest is the same as the distance between Brussels and Warsaw. Yet there also are small states: Delaware, Rhode Island, Connecticut. The problem of providing services to people in an effective way, of being responsive to the diversity of needs—from care for the elderly, concentrated in some areas, to the needs of minorities in other places—becomes increasingly difficult to manage. And the costs mount dreadfully.

Clearly, no one is going to do away with the states, and for good traditional and emotional reasons. Yet various bistate compacts and regional forms of organization must be worked out so that the 50 states do not become too lopsided and rigid in their structures.

THE CHANGING FACE OF AMERICA

Today some 28 million Americans are 65 years of age or older, making up 12 percent of the population. Given the "bulge" of the baby-boom years, by the year 2020, the elderly will number about 60 million and make up about 20 percent of the population. Not only will there be more Americans; they will, of course, live longer. A new problem: people over the age of 85 now make up only nine percent of the elderly population. By 2013, this may grow to 17 percent.

The consequences of these changes are varied but visible. At one end of the scale, increased chronic dependency and greater health-care needs of the elderly, with a growing burden on the young; at the other, a greater proportion of working-age persons to retired persons (more older persons will work, since Congress has now suspended even the compulsory retirement limit of age 70).

The United States has always been a nation of immigrants. Today the mix is changing. Half the increases in population will be coming from immigrants. Given the changes in the laws, the majority are from Latin America; a small but important number are from Asia.

By the year 2013, the white population will be about 74 percent of the total population of about 265 million. Blacks will make up about 13 percent, with 35 million; Hispanics about 10 percent, with 25 million. The Hispanic population already has grown by about 40 percent since 1970 because of fertility and immigration.

What can one say about the future of the American labor force? The ba-

sic blue-collar class, which today is about 20 percent of the labor force and concentrated in manufacturing, will decrease to about 10 percent by the year 2013 as manufacturing employment goes down. The growing classes are managerial and professional, and service—services here being food, cleaning, personal (barbers, etc.) and security—which all together rose 50 percent in the decade. (From 1970 to 1980, 14.3 million new jobs were created in services, and almost no net increase occurred in manufacturing employment.) The biggest growth in employment has come in small businesses rather than in large corporations, and this trend will continue.

To stand back, however, and draw the picture more sharply, I suggest that there will be a four-tiered system, taking this shape:

(a) an upper-middle class of professional and managerial workers, about 25 percent of the population;

(b) a middle class of technical, administrative support and skilled workers, representing 35 percent of the population;

(c) a service class, about 25 percent of the population; and

(d) an underclass of about 15 percent, comprising individuals with no steady employment, doing odd jobs, menial labor and the like.

We may see, equally, a new politics whose dimensions cut across each other and make continuing groupings difficult. The most important social change in this regard is the new role of women. On the professional level, women are concentrated more in the health and teaching and public-sector professions than are men, and employment in those areas is highly dependent on public funding. Generational politics becomes more important: the elderly are now an increasingly cohesive bloc whose interests are largely untouchable. The increasing mobilization of the minority groups is more certain. Regional issues will become more salient. The polarization of society based on educational cutoffs may increase populist sentiments. The down-sizing of the manufacturing corporation and the spread of more small businesses will increase the hopes and the expectations of independence for many persons, yet the short half-life of many small firms and the upheavals in corporate structures will intensify the insecurity of employment and incomes.

Sociology, which once could give us intelligent reportage, today has narrowed into minute quantitative research with little resonance or capacity for generalization. Yet the traditional social structure of the United States is breaking up, and we have little mapping of the present and fewer guides for the future.

VISIONS OF THE FUTURE

The key variable for the future is scale. Societies work when the scales of institutions match—particularly economic and political institutions. Increasingly, these are out of sync. On the international canvas, we need the creation of new institutions, politically, that can match the new scale of economic activities, beginning with the monetary system. At the domestic end, we need a better definition of what kind of governmental activities and resources should be committed, and at what levels, to make government responsive to services that people need. What is a legitimate neighborhood function? Should it be entrusted to a larger entity? Many services now performed by government for historic or political reasons can probably be better performed by the market.

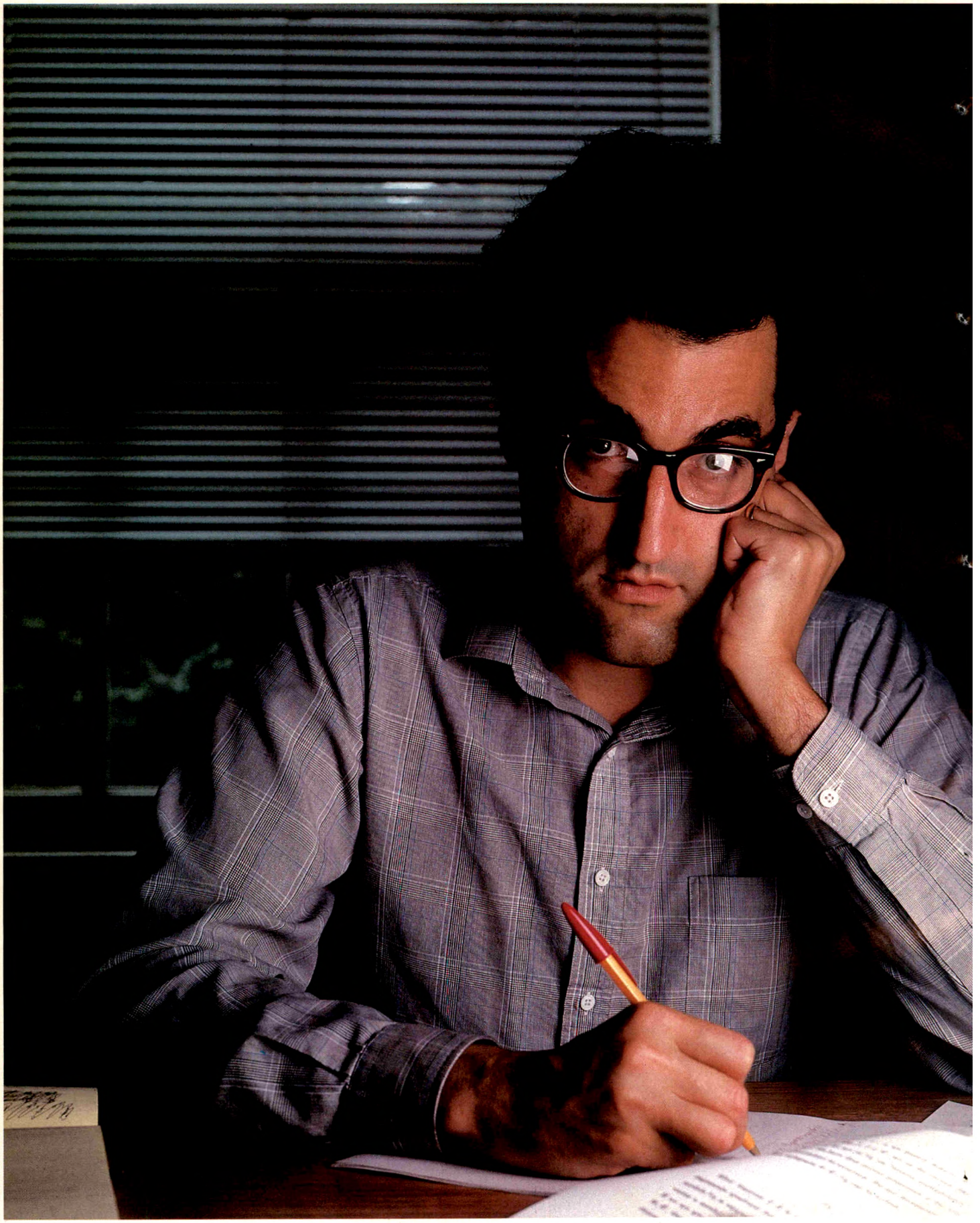
I have said little of Europe, or Africa, or Latin America—which may lead to the false conclusion that I see them as now outside the stage of history. Not at all. The very nature of the structural economic issues may force a movement toward continental economies as the new units of trade and management.

Consider the North American continent: Canada has the natural resources (timber, energy, metals), the United States the technological skill and educational resources, and Mexico the labor for such a new structure. Treating the area as a common economic region certainly would not solve all of the continent's problems, but it would be a start—certainly preferable to protectionism.

The vision of Europe as a single economic and cultural entity has long been the dream of many. In the instances of Western Europe and Japan, the economic issues have been subordinated to security and military issues, as both areas have largely been under the American shield. If security and military tensions were to diminish, the economic and cultural logics might have freer play: the possibility of a true European community could be a reality by 2013.

The social and political side of scale is the move away from bigness and bureaucracy. If there is a widespread consensus in Western societies, it is on the idea that individual and local community choice in as many matters as possible is a desirable value. It is the basis for the reaction to centralized planning or dirigisme in the socialist countries, and the reaction to rigid welfare-state programs and bureaucracies in the democratic countries. Privatization in the economy and provision of resources for communities to make their own decisions about social needs and welfare actually go hand in hand, though one is regarded as conservative and the other as socialist. The nature of the new production technologies does favor a new kind of artisan-entrepreneur system exploiting niche technologies and specialized markets.

As one reflects back to the kinds of predictions made by our rash forebears, one is mindful not only of the contingency of events created by the roles of powerful personalities and powerful ideas, but also of the dashing of hopes as new elites consolidate power and frustrate the dreams of people to create more equitable societies. A disciplined effort to identify structural changes—in the face of the overwhelming weight of political and cultural imponderables—leads one to a sense of the futility of such "rational" efforts. It is like holding a small candle in a hurricane to see if there are any paths ahead and how to go forth. But if one cannot light and hold even a small candle, then there is only darkness before us. ♦



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EDWARD WITTEN

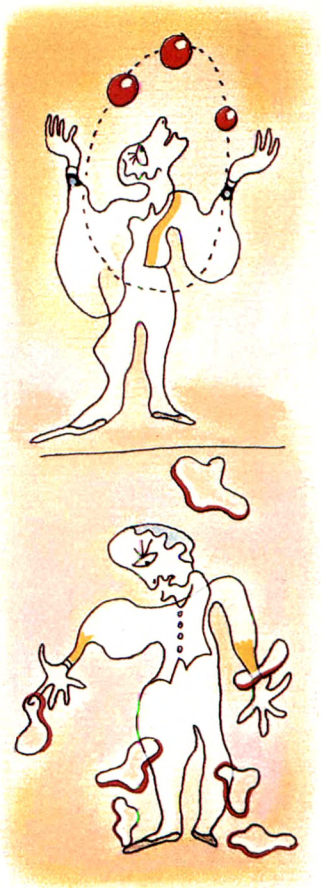
AND THE PHYSICS OF THE FUTURE

"String theory" may be the most revolutionary idea in physics since relativity and quantum theory. But is it true?

By K.C. Cole

From Isaac Newton to Albert Einstein and Niels Bohr, theoretical physicists have tried to find connections among the fundamental forces of nature. Currently Edward Witten has emerged as a leading advocate of one of the most promising—and most controversial—approaches to this problem: "string theory," a mathematical representation of a universe made not of billiard-ball-like particles of matter but of tiny loops or "strings" vibrating in 10 dimensions. If it is true, string theory has the potential of offering a single consistent explanation for everything from the inner workings of the atom to the structure of the cosmos. It may be a lifetime, however, before scientists develop the means to test it. In this article, science writer K.C. Cole sketches a portrait of a gifted thinker at work on the frontiers of mathematics and physics. "It's extremely important to believe in what you're doing," Witten says. "But it's difficult to have faith when things are so speculative. One lesson you can learn is, don't give up on right ideas. But how do you know they're right?"

K.C. Cole is the author of Sympathetic Vibrations: Reflections on Physics as a Way of Life. *Her articles have appeared in* Omni *and* The New York Times Magazine. *Cole recently completed a study on women and minorities in science for the Association of Science-Technology Centers.*



JUGGLING CONCEPTS

It seemed simple when we conceived of the universe as composed of particles like balls, pushed and pulled by various forces. String theory complicates the cosmos by proposing that the fundamental stuff of nature consists of tiny strings that form vibrating loops.

Despite his thick glasses, rumpled jacket, a tie that barely reaches past his sternum and the obligatory chalk-covered pants of a professor, he cuts a handsome figure. Striding across the room in long, sure steps, he conducts his lecture like a maestro, the rat-a-tat-tat of the chalk on the board providing a counterpoint to his high, breathy, sometimes inaudible voice. He talks of "vector bundles," "trivial modules," "free loop spaces." At one point he pauses: "We've been living in a finite dimensional world. Now I'm inviting you to jump into a world of infinite dimension."

He is Edward Witten of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey. At the age of 36, he is among the foremost physicists of his day, and he is in New York lecturing the Columbia University mathematics department on, of all things, the applications of physics to mathematics. Math—which has to do with abstract, intangible relationships—has always been an important tool in physics—which has to do with concrete forces and objects in the actual world. Witten has turned things upside down, attempting to show how physics can provide new insights into math.

"We shouldn't toss comparisons with Einstein around too freely," says Sam B. Treiman, a member of the physics department at Princeton University, "but when it comes to Witten...." His hands open in a

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If string theory is right, it could provide entirely new answers to questions asked since the beginning of human time: why is the universe the way it is and what is the origin of matter?

gesture of helplessness. "He's head and shoulders above the rest. He's started whole groups of people on new paths. He's started whole new fields. He produces elegant, breathtaking proofs which people gasp at, which leave them in awe."

Witten is everywhere at once, publishing papers and lecturing on cosmology, mathematics and many different aspects of physics. When Witten talks, physicists listen. In particular, they perked up their ears several years ago when he began to pay serious attention to a seemingly bizarre and long-forgotten theory that turns our current picture of the physical universe on its head. Although it is nearly impossible to put a finger on the single contribution that has made Witten such a force in physics, his passion for this controversial theory makes him a leading proponent of what may be the most revolutionary idea in physics in more than half a century—as revolutionary, claims Witten, as relativity, as revolutionary as quantum theory.

If the theory is right, as Witten believes it may ultimately prove to be, it could provide entirely new answers to fundamental questions asked by philosophers, poets and theologians since the beginning of human time: why is the universe the way it is and what is the origin of matter? Although the term makes Witten uncomfortable, some people call it a "theory of everything."

String theory," as it is commonly known (some scientists call it "superstring theory"), does away with the familiar image of a universe composed of billiard-ball-like particles pushed and pulled by familiar forces like gravity and electricity. Quantum theory had already revealed in the 1920s that the billiard balls have curious wavelike properties: they are more like vibrations than well-defined points in space. Now string theory is proposing that these points, in fact, are tiny loops, or closed "strings." The strings vibrate invisibly in subtle resonances. These vibrations, so the theory goes, make up everything in the universe—from light to lightning bugs, from gravity to gold.

These strings are not, of course, visible, nor are they like rubber bands or pieces of twine. Impossible to detect by any means known to science today, they are mathematical curves. Talking about strings, like talking about billiard balls or waves, is a crude way of trying to comprehend the unfamiliar in familiar terms. But then physics has always had to resort to metaphor. As the Danish physicist Niels Bohr, the father of quantum theory, once put it, "When it comes to atoms, language can be used only as in poetry. The poet, too, is not nearly so concerned with describing facts as with creating images."

Previous scientific theories describing the universe have not yet been able to create an image that fits all the pieces of the universe together within a single conceptual framework. Physicists have opened the atom, like a series of Russian dolls, to reveal, first, electrons, protons and neutrons—then, more exotic entities like neutrinos and quarks. They have learned how nuclear, gravitational and electromagnetic forces mold these particles into molecules and galaxies. But nobody knows why, among other things, there should be electrons at all, or why particles are affected by gravity. String theory, according to its adherents, has the potential of offering a single consistent explanation for everything from the inner workings of the atom to the structure of the cosmos.

Unfortunately, string theory contains what some scientists consider to be a major flaw. The mathematical consistency that makes it so compelling is revealed only if we are willing to suspend our belief in a world fashioned from the familiar four dimensions of height, breadth, width and time, and instead suppose the existence of six additional hidden dimensions—a total of 10 in all.

Imagine a closed string—a loop—of some kind of fundamental stuff. Now imagine that the loop rotates, twists and vibrates not only in the three familiar spatial dimensions (plus one dimension of time) but also in six other dimensions we can't perceive. As the loop wriggles, it resonates in many different modes, like a 10-dimensional violin string sending out cosmic versions of A or E flat. These vibrations, if string theory is correct, determine all the possible particles and forces of the universe.

Pressed for further explanation, Witten smiles and shrugs. "Nobody understands this much better than I just explained it to you," he says.

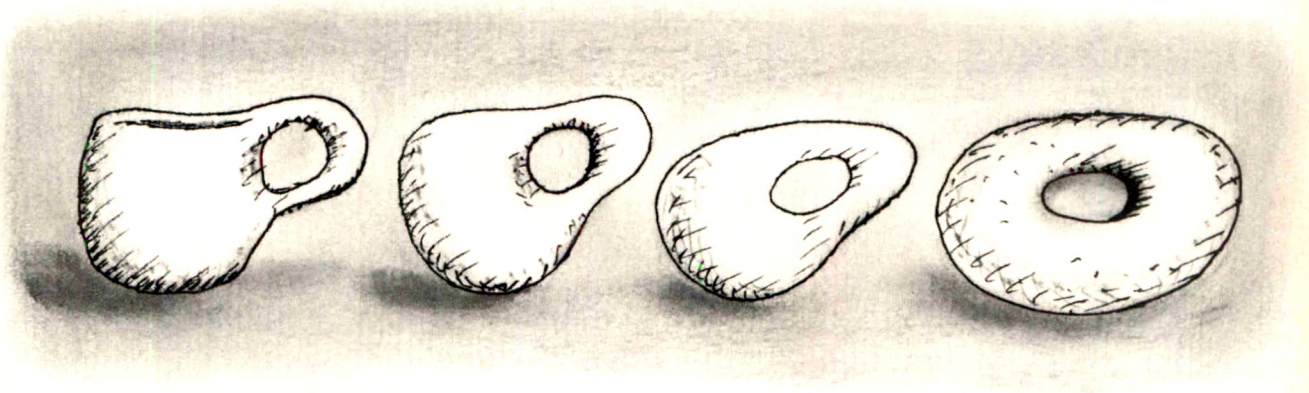
Ten dimensions don't bother Witten in the least: "These extra dimensions aren't stranger than a lot of other things physicists think about." Still, the notion of a 10-dimensional universe and the absence of any experimental data that could offer proof of it have caused many physicists to be highly skeptical. "It's not obvious how string theory explains certain striking facts about the universe," says Frank A. Wilczek, of the Institute of Theoretical Physics at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

To be sure, string theory has a great deal to explain. For example, it will have to show just how it is that six extra dimensions remain invisible to us. String theorists imagine these dimensions to be "rolled up" tightly around themselves on scales thousands of millions of times smaller than the nucleus of an atom. But they do not yet know how, why or when the six hidden dimensions rolled up. Perhaps, some theorists say, they simply failed to expand thousands of millions of years ago when the rest of the universe began doing so.

Such doubts do not in any way diminish Witten's conviction. "It is very possible that a proper understanding of string theory will make the spacetime continuum melt away," Witten says. "String theory is a miracle through and through."

Witten started getting offers of professorships within a few years of completing graduate school at Princeton, where he became a full professor at 28. He's received a plethora of prizes from all over the world, including a MacArthur Fellowship and, most recently, the National Science Foundation's award for the best young researcher.

In physics, the yearning for an ultimate explanation has always been evident. Time and time again, physics has advanced when seemingly diverse phenomena have turned out to be different aspects of the same thing. Newton's great discovery, for instance, was that the same force that pulled the apple to the ground also held the moon in its orbit around the Earth and the Earth in its orbit around the sun. Magnetism, electricity and light were long thought to be completely unconnected—until the 19th century when James Clark Maxwell and Michael Faraday found that all were manifestations of electromagnetism. Einstein's theory of relativity grew out of his efforts to reconcile electromagnetism with classical mechanics.



A MUG'S METAMORPHOSIS

Topology, the study of the properties of geometric shapes as they are manipulated in various dimensions, figures prominently in string theory. A one-handled cup is topologically equivalent to a doughnut. If it were made of malleable clay, it could be reshaped into a doughnut without tearing the material. "It's so obvious," Witten says. "There are properties of things that change when you break them, but not when you bend them."

Illustrations © 1988 by Paul Degen

Most recently, physicists have been obsessed with trying to unify, or find connections among, the known fundamental forces of nature: gravity, electromagnetism, the "strong" force that holds particles together within the nucleus of an atom and the "weak" force that accounts for, among other things, radioactivity, the spontaneous disintegration of the nucleus that results in the emission of energy.

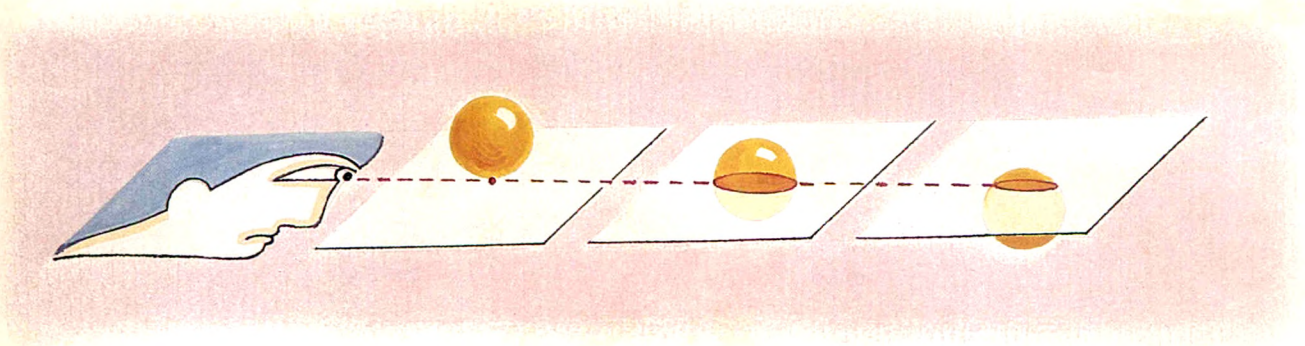
Electromagnetism, the strong and the weak forces, and all the known particles in the universe can be described in terms of quantum theory, a fact Witten considers "magic." The theory has given rise to an entire field of scientific inquiry to which Witten himself has made several important contributions. According to quantum theory, everything results from the interactions of fields of energy. The fields vibrate, but only in certain patterns or resonances that correspond to specific quantities (hence the term *quantum*) of energy. These resonances are the familiar particles and forces of the everyday world. In fact, physicists who use giant accelerators to smash atoms and search for exotic particles have been known to call their work "resonance hunting."

Quantum theory managed to clear up a host of questions and led to an understanding of subatomic processes that has since produced everything from lasers to semiconductors. Nevertheless, quantum theory cannot account for gravity. Mathematical calculations that try to fit gravity within that framework yield unworkable results.

"If it weren't for gravity," says Witten, "we'd probably think we already knew everything fundamental about nature. But gravity doesn't fit. It's a clue that something is wrong with our understanding. Why gravity doesn't fit is the big mystery of mysteries."

Yet gravity interacts with every kind of energy in the universe—even a light beam falls under its influence. So gravity has to obey the same laws of nature. The question is, what are they?

For much of his career, Einstein struggled to unite gravity with electromagnetism to explain all of nature



UNSEEN DIMENSIONS

If there are, as string theory argues, six hidden dimensions in addition to our familiar four, why can't we perceive them? For the same reason an inhabitant of a hypothetical two-dimensional world could not comprehend a sphere. As it passed through flattened space, the sphere would first appear as a point, then as a circle and, finally, as a point again just before it vanished.

in terms of one "unified field." He never succeeded. But in 1919, he got a letter from an obscure German-born physicist named Theodor F.E. Kaluza suggesting that electromagnetism could be understood as a fifth-dimensional manifestation of gravity. Kaluza didn't explain why the fifth dimension remained unperceived. But in 1926, a Swedish mathematician, Oskar Klein, suggested this was so because the fifth dimension was rolled up so tightly—existed on such a tiny scale—that it did not affect anything as large as even a subatomic particle.

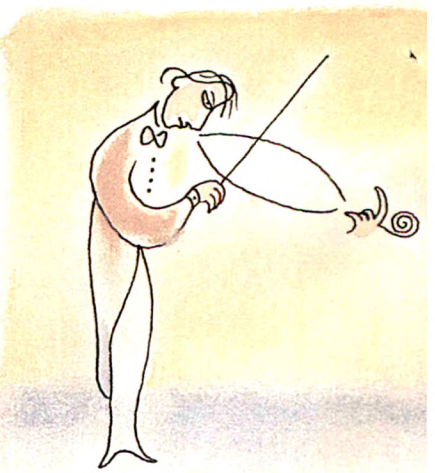
String theory is a resurrected form of the Kaluza-Klein theory, although vastly more sophisticated. Just as Klein's fifth dimension shriveled up into invisibility, so the extra six dimensions in string theory somehow "compacted." If we accept the idea of those six hidden dimensions, string theory proposes, mathematical inconsistencies that have plagued previous attempts to reconcile quantum theory and gravity wondrously disappear.

But it's not clear that string theory accurately represents reality. No evidence apart from mathematical consistency supports the existence of six extra dimensions. Still, mathematical consistency, Witten says, has been "one of the most reliable guides to physicists in the last century."

Even if it has mathematical consistency, what string theory is still missing are underlying concepts. "Vibrating strings in 10 dimensions is just a weird fact," says Witten. "An explanation of that weird fact would tell you why there are 10 dimensions in the first place."

Formal, quiet, withdrawn, Witten is hesitant to talk about his accomplishments. Sidney Coleman, the Harvard physicist, remembers visiting Witten in Princeton just after Witten had moved there from Cambridge. Coleman asked him how he compared living in quiet, suburban Princeton with his previous existence in the bustling Boston area. Witten responded: "In Princeton, I sit at my kitchen table at night doing physics instead of going down to Nassau Street. At Harvard, I sat at my kitchen table at night doing physics instead of going to Harvard Square."

To some extent, the world of the theorist is by definition a private one. The work requires no lab, no test tubes, no cyclotrons, no supercomputers, no equipment of any sort apart from a pencil and paper, and sometimes not even that. Although Witten has graduate students, he is reluctant to involve them in his more



speculative projects. "It would be gambling their futures," he says.

If you listen to Witten, becoming a physicist was almost a casual thing. Although his father, Louis Witten, is a gravitational physicist, he says he wasn't all that influenced by his family. "I came within a whisker of doing other things."

Witten grew up in Baltimore, Maryland, and got his undergraduate degree in history at Brandeis University in Massachusetts, where his real interest, however, was linguistics. Before he entered graduate school at Princeton, he wrote articles for *The Nation*, *The New Republic* and other publications. For a six-month period during 1972, he worked on George McGovern's presidential campaign as an aide to one of the candidate's legislative assistants. Still, Witten feels, he lacked the qualities necessary for a career in writing or politics, foremost among them, "common sense." When he entered graduate school at Princeton, he came very close to choosing mathematics before settling on physics.

Witten's colleagues tend to give him far more credit that he gives himself, especially when it comes to his role in calling attention to string theory.

Physicists didn't set out to look for string theory, nor did they seriously follow up Kaluza-Klein. Rather, they tripped over string theory in the dark and have been trying to figure out exactly what it is ever since. "I don't think that any physicist would have been clever enough to have invented string theory on purpose," says Witten. "Luckily, it was invented by accident."

In 1968, an Italian physicist named Gabriele Veneziano was investigating the strong force (the glue that holds particles together within the nucleus) when he stumbled upon what Witten describes as "a formula that had a few curious properties." It was a few years later, through the work of Yoichiro Nambu of the University of Chicago and others, that people "realized that silly formula described vibrating strings."

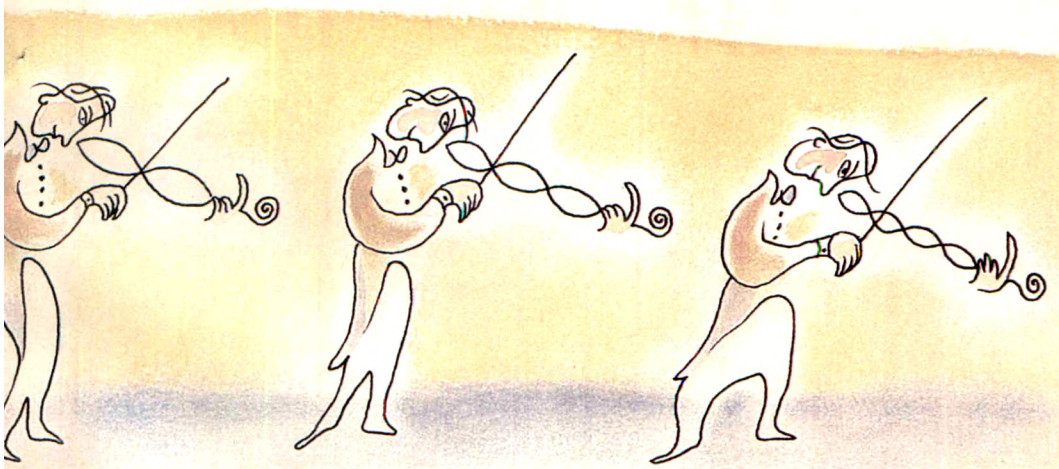
For a few years, string theory generated a great deal of interest. By the mid-1970s, however, it had been largely abandoned, partly because other lines of thought seemed more promising, and partly because it required the unacceptable idea of extra dimensions.

"When people found out that it made sense only in 10 dimensions," says Witten, "most people left the field." His own interest in it was sparked primarily by the work of the physicists John H. Schwarz of the California Institute of Technology and Michael B. Green of Queen Mary College in London. Witten remembers going through a "few rough months to learn about it. It was unlike anything anyone had seen before. There was no encouragement from anybody."

By all accounts, it was a series of papers written by Schwarz and Green in the early 1980s that resuscitated the theory. In 1984, they published an important paper that, according to Nobel Prize-winning physicist Steven Weinberg of the University of Texas, answered a question that had also been posed by Witten.

The question had to do with anomalies that appeared in theories that tried to put gravity together with quantum-field theory. Anomalies are defects in a theory that yield absurd results and make the theory meaningless. Witten, along with Luis Alvarez-Gaumé of Harvard, discovered a new class of anomalies. Even more important, he showed that the origin of the anomalies was topological—that is, related to geometric properties that do not arise in four dimensions but do arise in 10.

Topology, the study of the properties of geometric figures as they are distorted or deformed in various dimensions, is, for Witten, "basic." The thought that lay people might not be familiar with topology strikes him as funny. "That's like saying they don't know how to speak in prose," he says, borrowing a joke from Molière. A cup with one handle, for instance, is topologically equivalent to a doughnut. If the cup were made of malleable clay,



GOOD VIBRATIONS

Imagine a closed string—a loop—of some kind of fundamental stuff. Now imagine that the loop rotates, twists and vibrates not only in the three familiar spatial dimensions (plus one dimension of time), but also in six dimensions we can't perceive. As the loop wriggles, it resonates in different modes, like a 10-dimensional violin string. These vibrations may determine all the possible particles and forces of the universe.

If we could see the universe in its 10-dimensional entirety, string theory presumes, a new symmetry would appear and the array of forces and particles would be revealed as facets of one cohesive whole.

it could be reshaped into the doughnut without tearing the material. "It's so obvious," Witten says. "There are properties of things that change when you break them, but not when you bend them." He admits, "Physicists didn't use to take topology seriously either."

Topology is critical to Witten because the question of whether the real world can be explained by string theory depends not only on whether the extra dimensions exist, but also on the forms they take in space—whether they are, say, rolled up like tubes or have holes like doughnuts or are spheres.

Appealing to extra dimensions actually makes some problems simpler. Consider a riddle: a pair of explorers walks due south for one kilometer, then due east for one kilometer, then due north for one kilometer, only to find themselves at the starting point. Question: what color are the bears?

This riddle makes no sense as long as the explorers are walking on a flat, two-dimensional surface, as on a conventional map. But the Earth is a three-dimensional sphere. Its surface curves. Taking this into account, the answer to the riddle becomes obvious: the explorers' starting point was the North Pole. The bears are white.

In his Victorian science-fiction classic *Flatland*, Edwin Abbott demonstrated eloquently that what seems puzzling and obscure in one dimension can become crystal clear in another. In his hypothetical world of two-dimensional triangles and squares, a three-dimensional sphere was an incomprehensible object. As it passed through this flattened space, it would first appear as a point, then as a widening circle that finally shrank back to a point and faded away. A two-dimensional creature can see only one two-dimensional slice of a sphere at a time. It takes a three-dimensional onlooker to see a sphere in its entirety.

And if we could see the universe in its 10-dimensional entirety, string theory presumes, a new symmetry would appear and the puzzling array of forces and particles would be revealed as different facets of one cohesive whole.

Unfortunately, this tantalizing symmetry inherent in 10-dimensional space is not easy to translate into four-dimensional particles and forces. To be comprehended it requires incredibly subtle mathematical tools, ones that probably haven't even been invented.

Several years ago, Witten had a conversation with a colleague that struck him deeply. "He was talking about a very talented physicist who wasn't as productive as he might have been. And he said it was because he never worked on the kinds of problems for which he was really suited."

Witten has been serious about taking his colleague's implied advice. What he's suited for, he says, is "taking a physics problem and finding a solution based on bizarre mathematics. String theory is going to require a lot of new mathematics—and applying bizarre mathematics to physics is what I'm good at."

During the past several years, Witten has been one of the leaders in a new liaison that string theory has forged between physicists and mathematicians. "In my book, he's *the* leader," says I.M. Singer, a mathematics professor at MIT. "His intuition is fantastic." Of his most important contributions, Witten describes several as contributions not to physics, but to mathematics.

Close liaisons between physics and mathematics have marked most of the major advances in our understanding of the universe. Newton needed to invent a new kind of mathematics—calculus—to complete his theory of gravity. Einstein's general relativity relied on a geometry of curved space invented by the German mathematician Georg F.B. Riemann in the mid-1800s. Quantum theory required a tool called "functional analysis."

String theory, Witten says, "brings us to the frontiers of mathematics." But that doesn't deter him: "I realized I could actually turn it around, and get some surprising insights about mathematics from physics."

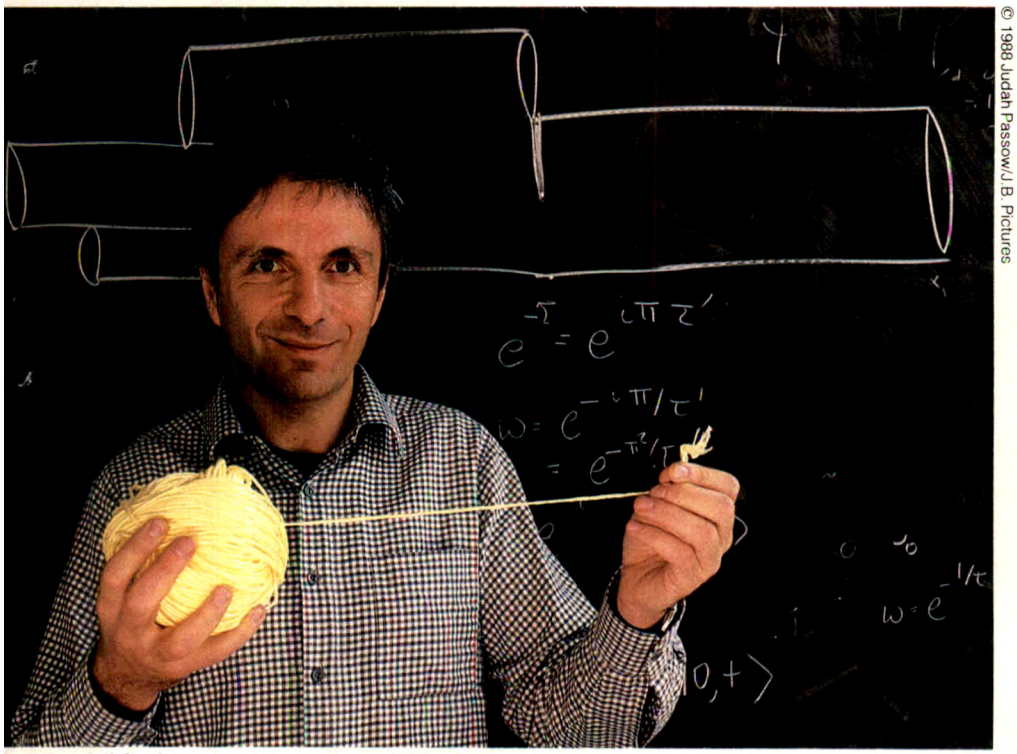
The new marriage between physics and mathematics has made physics truly difficult for the first time for Witten. That's one reason he accepted an invitation to join the prestigious Institute for Advanced Study next door to Princeton University, where he'll be free from teaching obligations. "I want to work in a more ambitious way on half as many things." All of them are aspects of string theory.

Witten's work cannot now, nor for the foreseeable future, be tested in a lab. In fact, it is so far removed from observable reality that a lifetime or more may be required before its value—or any possible application—is known. Theoretical physics is a risky business. "It's extremely important to believe in what you're doing," Witten says. "But it's difficult to have faith when things are so speculative."

"One lesson you can learn," he continues, "is don't make mistakes. But that's not very useful. Another lesson is, don't give up on right ideas. But how do you know they're right?"

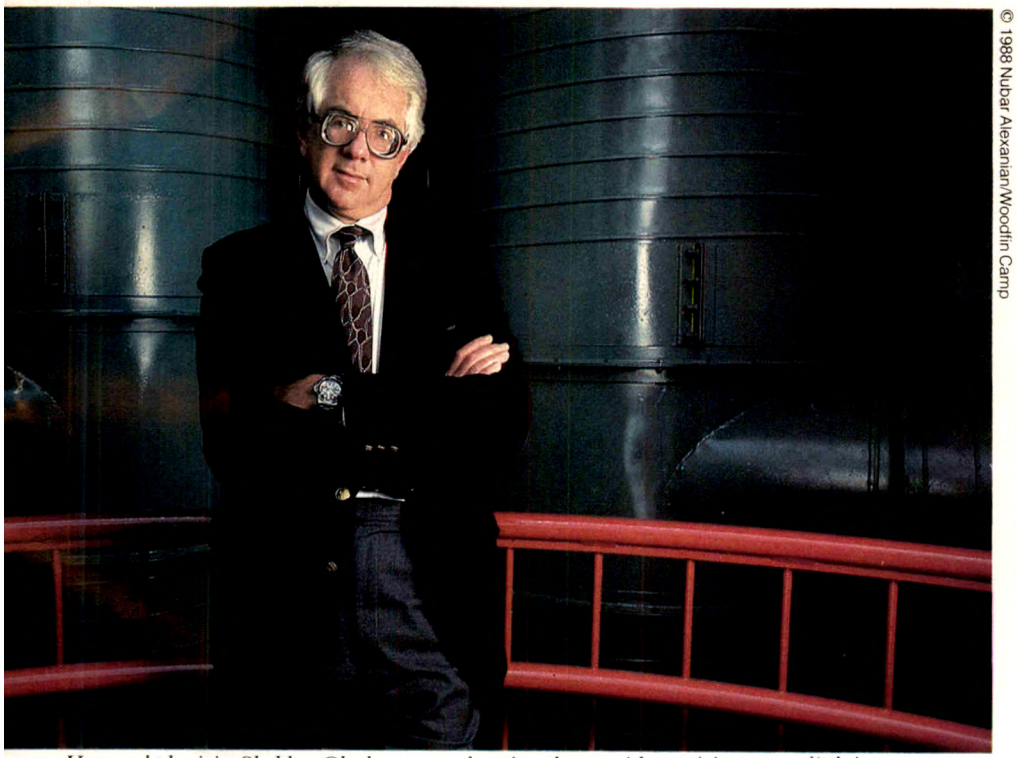
Because string theory is so speculative, a good many physicists regard it with suspicion and even disdain. Harvard Nobel laureate Sheldon L. Glashow coauthored an article in *Physics Today* with his colleague Paul Ginsparg—entitled, after a comic film, "Desperately Seeking Superstrings?"—in which they wrote: "A naïve comparison suggests that to calculate the electron mass from superstrings would be a million million times more difficult than to explain human behavior in terms of atomic physics."

Witten describes such criticism as "manifest silliness. It's not always so easy," he says, "to tell which are the easy questions and which are the hard ones. In the 19th century, the question of why water boils at 100 degrees



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Michael Green, of Queen Mary College in London, helped resuscitate string theory.



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Harvard physicist Sheldon Glashow regards string theory with suspicion, even disdain.

centigrade was hopelessly inaccessible. If you told a 19th-century physicist that by the 20th century you would be able to calculate this, it would have seemed like a fairy tale ....Quantum-field theory is so difficult that nobody fully believed it for 25 years."

Witten points out that neutron stars and gravitational lenses—large concentrations of matter in outer space that produce, for earthly observers, double images of stars—were considered science fiction, pure speculation, until they were suddenly found in the skies. "The history of science is littered with predictions that such and such an idea wasn't practical and would never be tested. The history of physics shows that good ideas get tested."

String theory, for Witten, is too good *not* to be true. If it seems difficult and complicated, that only means it's not well understood. For now, string theory remains "a piece of 21st-century physics that fell by chance into the 20th century," he says. What physicists are working with today is but "a few crumbs from the table compared to the feast which awaits us."

Still, he worries at times that it might be too difficult. "There are long odds against its leading anywhere in the next few years, but I feel I would be missing the point if I didn't try."

John Ellis, a theoretical physicist at the European Center for Nuclear Research, the international laboratory in Geneva, recently wrote, "Superstring phenomenology is still a very young subject. There are many open questions and technical problems, and it is easy to ridicule superstring advocates for their totalitarian fervor. However, in the words of a candy wrapper I opened a few years ago: 'It is only the optimists who achieve anything in this world.'"

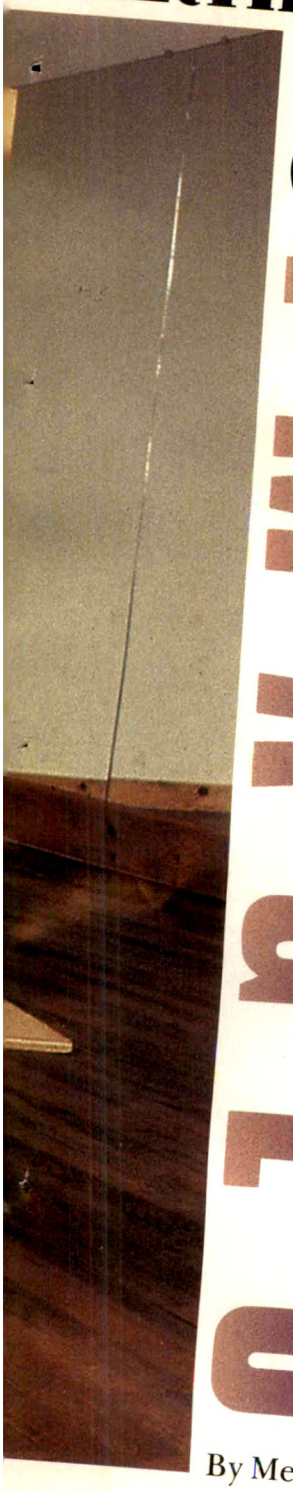
Or, as Witten says, "To test string theory, we will probably have to be lucky. But in physics, there are many ways of being lucky." ♦

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Some call it dance, some call it theater,
but Martha Clarke's inspiration usually comes from literary w

MARTHA CLARKE'S THEATER OF I·M·A·G·E·S



By Mel Gussow

Time magazine recently called Martha Clarke "the hottest figure in New York City's avant-garde theater," yet the performance art she creates is not easy to classify. Like much experimental theater, Clarke's pieces lack conventional plots, often relying instead on a literary text as a basis for visually powerful scenes typical of film or painting. In their emphasis on music and expressive movement, they suggest dance as well. Here New York Times *drama critic Mel Gussow traces Clarke's career and tells how her 1987 work,* The Hunger Artist, *based on a Kafka short story, gradually took shape in rehearsal, at left.*

In Martha Clarke's work, theater and dance are inseparable, unified into a style of performance that lacks a name but not a dimension. Her pieces, marked by their precision and visual beauty, are performance-art objects.

Using a collage technique, an abstract method influenced by her years as a choreographer of modern dance, the director puts together movement, gesture, music, dramatic scenes—sometimes with dialogue, sometimes without—patterns of light and scenic design. The result, when it succeeds, produces, in her words, a "fractured clarity." Watching a Clarke theater piece, audiences have been known to sigh with pleasure. The response is audible and visceral.

In *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, her exhilarating 1984 interpretation of the Hieronymus Bosch painting about heaven and hell, dancers—supported by wires—flew over the stage and over the heads of theatergoers, floating and swirling like heavenly bodies. This aerial ballet, to music by the composer Richard Peaslee, was only one of the show's numerous otherworldly delights, as the director used the theater as an imagistic canvas on which to animate her impressions of the Bosch triptych. Using mime, actors transformed themselves into mythological beasts, musical instruments and souls flying off to heaven.

In *Vienna: Lusthaus*, performed in 1986, the director broadened her palette to include the disparate colors of an entire city—Vienna at the turn of the century. The walls of the set, seen through a scrim, were at a tilt, distorting our view into a dreamlike vision. In tableaux, men often in uniform, women in long dresses and petticoats, conjured up both the elegance and decadence of this city of contradictions. Arching his legs, an actor mimed the movements of Vienna's Lippizaner horses; beautiful nudes posed as if they were life models for painter Gustav Klimt; actors spoke lyrical fragments adapted from Freud's letters and other sources. Images, many of them erotic, appeared and disappeared; changes of mood were created by the play of Paul Gallo's lighting. Snow began to fall as the play moved from waltz-time to jackbooted marching. As in *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, an Eden was followed by a Fall.

In 1987, the Music-Theatre Group at St. Clement's Church in New York City performed Clarke's third major work, *The Hunger Artist*, based on the stories, letters and diaries of Franz Kafka. With these successes behind her, Martha Clarke is, at 43, at the top of her profession, although no one, including the director herself, quite knows what that profession is.

During rehearsals of the Kafka work—in the director's home in Connecticut, in a dance studio in nearby New Milford and in various New York locations—she and her collaborators—the designers as well as the performers—researched, discussed and tried to understand their difficult subject. Generally the dancers were in one studio, actors in another. As the deadline approached, the work seemed to be in disarray. Finally the

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I·M·A·G·E·S *Rob Besserer and Paola Styron in "The Hunger Artist," based on a Kafka short story, 1987.*

director discovered both a title and a theme, or "through-line." The title came from the Kafka story "A Hunger Artist," which deals with a man whose profession is fasting and who eventually starves himself to death. The through-line is starvation and dying. "Emotional and literal starvation," says Clarke, and, realizing the heaviness of that summary, adds, "She said laughingly."

Repeatedly, in Kafka stories, "a man stops eating," and, she says, in Kafka's personal life "there was an emotional starvation," especially in his relationship with his father. "Kafka also denied himself his appetite for marriage and a well-balanced life." That realization, arrived at in rehearsal, made this "eureka day," but, as a pragmatist, Clarke knew that tomorrow would be "back to boiled potatoes."

The arduous work would continue until, and after, the play began its two-month run in St. Clement's theater. Most of the work, she says, is done in the last tenth of the rehearsal period.

As a performance artist in the experimental theater, Martha Clarke is in a category with people as diverse as Robert Wilson and Spalding Gray. The former, the D.W. Griffith of the avant-garde, presents spectacular epics or "operas"; the latter, an autobiographical monologist, sits at a card table and tells stories from his life.

What they, Clarke and others have in common is that, on stage, each offers a uniquely personal vision. Performance artists are their own conceptual directors, the closest the theater has come to the cinematic auteur. In contrast to her peers, Clarke's work is distinctive in its passion, its use of movement, its brevity—no

piece has run more than one hour—and its concern with art and culture.

In the 1960s, experimental theater—energized by the revolutionary politics of the time—emphasized the communal creative approach. In New York, the Living Theater, the Open Theater and the Performance Group were all activist acting ensembles.

By the end of the 1970s and into the '80s, the theatrical avant-garde increasingly turned multimedia. Computerized technology appeared imaginatively in the work of Robert Wilson and Ping Chong, with Ruth Maleczech and Lee Breuer's use of holographs on stage and with John Jesurun and the Squat Theater's cross-breeding of theater, film and television techniques.

Through all these years, one of the most consistent innovators of the avant-garde has been British theater and film director Peter Brook. With his use of "the empty stage," as in his unadorned production of Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, and his nonverbal spectacles, he seeks a more universal theater.

Although Clarke has had little opportunity to see experimental theater, there is a clear relationship between her ensemble pieces and the work of the Open Theater, Peter Brook and the Polish director Tadeusz Kantor. She is an outgrowth of this history at the same time that she has her own highly individualized—and uninfluenced—identity. Other contemporary choreographers, Meredith Monk for example, have taken a sidestep into conceptual theater, but Clarke has been the most successful synthesizer.

By her own admission, she is her own harshest critic, the first to spot a failure. In her self-criticism, she is buoyed by her iconoclastic conviction that "this is not Holy Grail time." She is not out to transmit a message. In other words, she takes herself seriously, but not too seriously.

While playwrights sit at typewriters and individually consult their muse, Martha Clarke's approach is art in action. She opens herself to collaboration with members of her company and with friends. In the case of *The Hunger Artist*, each of the participants—including the seven performers—was free to offer ideas, and so was her designer, Robert Israel. She even asked the owner of a Czechoslovak restaurant in Connecticut for his advice about the use of Czech words.

During this trial-and-error period, the director looked at paintings by Chagall and Goya, at German photographer August Sander's portraits of people in Europe; she screened and rescreened Federico Fellini's *8 1/2*, and other films, searching for ideas that could be interpreted and interpolated into the Kafka piece. "I'm really a thief of style and line," she says. "I'll take something and transpose it so that you won't know what its source is."

Despite all the collaboration, she remains the final editor and arbiter, sifting all possibilities and giving the work, in the end, her own signature. "I love watching beautiful movement, but what I've always been interested in is the story, not in how high I could get my leg or what extraordinary leap I could do," she says. "For me, the subtext was always the prime motivation in making up a movement—always, always, from the age of 15."

Although she is a theater artist, her primary models are choreographic and cinematic. The late Antony Tudor, she says, was "dance's finest dramatist," and she admires filmmakers, "Fellini for his humanity, Ingmar Bergman for his elegance and bleakness, Luchino Visconti for his sense of detail."

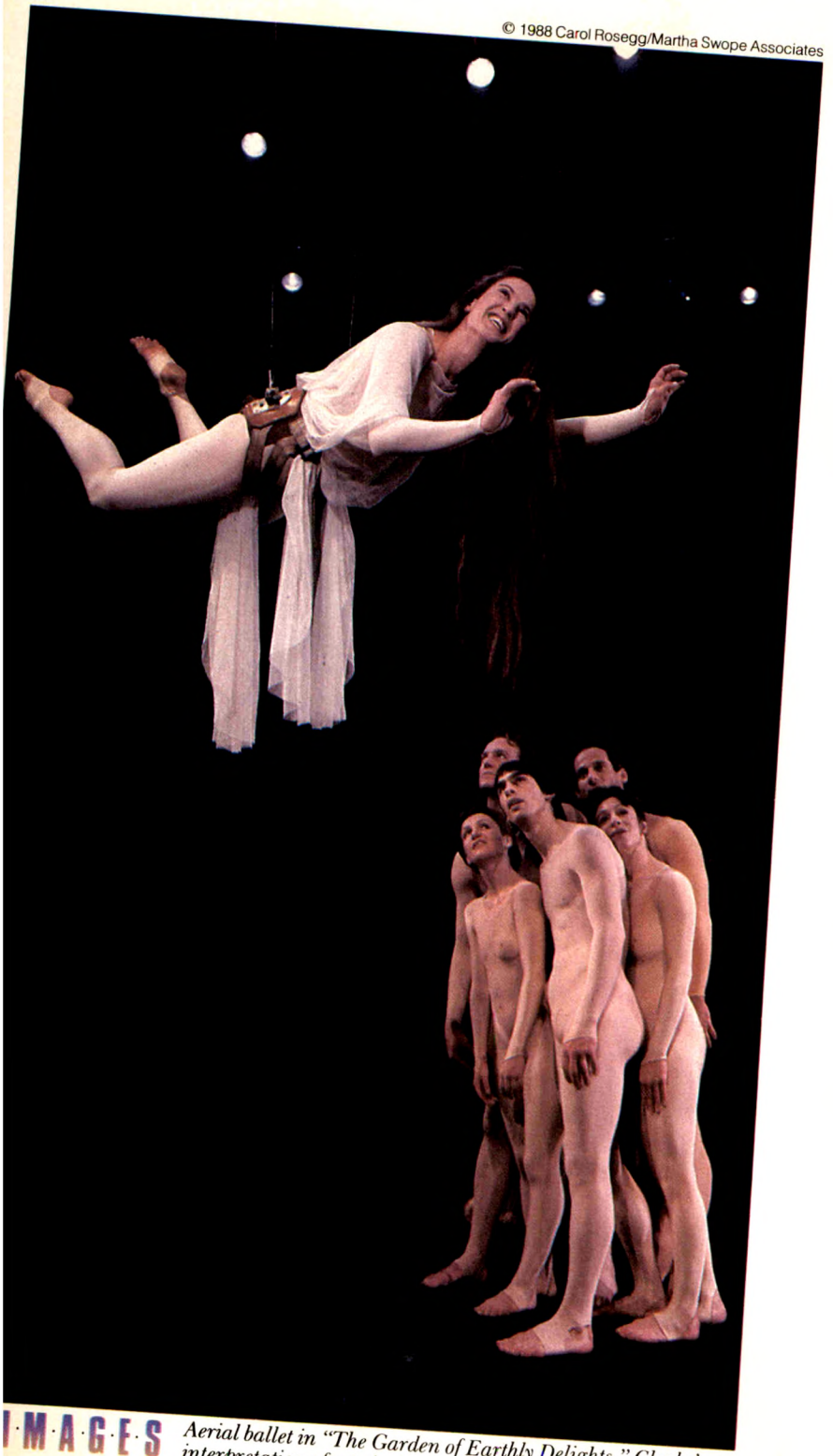
Through Martha Clarke's life there has been a simultaneity of choice and chance; when she wanted to do something, she had the opportunity to do it. She was born in 1944, the second child and only daughter of a suburban-Baltimore couple. Her father was a lawyer and, formerly, a jazz musician and songwriter; her mother plays the piano.

Beginning at the age of six, she studied dancing at the Peabody Conservatory of Music in Baltimore, and she also took art classes at the Baltimore Museum of Art. By 15, she was studying at the American Dance Festival in Connecticut, where she first saw the work of the choreographer Anna Sokolow. She had a characteristically passionate reaction: "I was knocked off my chair by the strong



I·M·A·G·E·S *Lila York in "Vienna: Lusthaus," an evocation of Vienna at the turn of the century, 1986.*

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IMAGES *Aerial ballet in "The Garden of Earthly Delights," Clarke's interpretation of a painting by Hieronymus Bosch, 1984.*

dramatic element." At the Juilliard School she studied dance with Louis Horst, a fierce taskmaster who drove her to tears at the same time he inspired her to greater efforts. She traces her style of theater to Horst's class in "modern forms," where she created dance movements based on impressionist painting or on primitive and medieval art.

Shortly after graduating from Juilliard, she married Philip Grausman, a young sculptor and a winner of a Prix de Rome. The two moved to Italy, where they immersed themselves in the world of art. Soon after they returned to America, their son David was born. When Grausman was named an artist-in-residence at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, his wife was taken again by a desire to perform. Several young Dartmouth men had started the Pilobolus Dance Theater, and their dance instructor, Alison Chase, and Clarke "elbowed" their way into the all-male company. With its tremendous physicality and humor, Pilobolus was to make a striking impact on modern dance. Clarke's role was principally that of resident clown. In a signature piece, *Untitled*, she and Chase were held aloft by male dancers who were hidden by the women's long, sweeping gowns.

After seven years, she left, and together with dancer Felix Blaska, formed her own company, Crowsnest. Soon, she took a tentative step into theater, choreographing Stravinsky's *L'Histoire du Soldat* at the Long Wharf Theater, in New Haven, Connecticut.

For Lyn Austin, the producer of the Music-Theater Group, Clarke and actress Linda Hunt put together a brief collage of dance and drama for the company's season in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. This was followed by a production of *Elizabeth Dead*, a play by *New Yorker* humorist George W.S. Trow. The next step was into Kafka, *A Metamorphosis in Miniature*, which marked her New York debut as a theater director. Lasting barely 35 minutes, this was a dense dramatization of Kafka's story, performed by the late actor David Rounds and Linda Hunt.

Some time later, Lyn Austin called Clarke and said she was applying for a National Endowment for the Arts grant for her theater group and needed a proposal. Did she have any idea for a project? Reflecting on pos-

sibilities—and checking her bookshelves—Clarke chose Hieronymus Bosch. The piece that became *The Garden of Earthly Delights* was a journey through time and space, beginning with primordial ooze and leading from the Garden of Eden to the Seven Deadly Sins and on to Hell. In its final form, *Garden* was both celestial and sensual. After its extended engagement at St. Clement's in New York, *Garden* toured America and Europe.

By this time, Clarke was creating *Vienna: Lusthaus*. Over a period of five months, the piece grew from a series of disjointed fragments into a seamless collage. There were moments when she and her collaborative team questioned their own creativity. One day, close to the first public performance, everything seemed to go awry. Only the director had confidence in her proximity to her muse. She slashed 20 minutes out of the piece, rearranged the scenes and compressed it into its final breathtaking form. "I have a terrible fear of things going on too long," she says.

With an enthusiastic reception from the press and public and coming on the crest of a wave of interest in the art of Vienna, the show expanded her audience and also opened artistic doors. Movie projects were suggested. She has ideas for a performance piece inspired by Toulouse-Lautrec's drawings of the circus; and others about such artists as James Ensor, Goya, Vuillard and Balthus. She considered reviving *A Metamorphosis in Miniature*, but when she began thinking about the subject she decided to create an entirely new and more extensive piece on Kafka. As with *Vienna: Lusthaus*, her Kafka play coincides with an increased artistic concern with her chosen subject.

For the Kafka play, the first step was for Robert Israel to design a set, the outline of a triangular house with striped walls. When the designer described a scene in a movie he had seen on television—a prison courtyard with shallow graves—Clarke immediately decided to incorporate the image into the set, placing a large box filled with earth on stage. She thought this was an apt accompaniment to Kafka's numerous references to earth. Then, too, the earth would be in direct contrast to the pristine stage setting of *Vienna: Lusthaus*. To facilitate rehearsals, a large box of soil was installed in the director's house.

When she and her husband divorced, she bought a smaller house in the same part of Connecticut. The house, on a knoll, was formerly the home of the painter Arshile Gorky. The furniture is old and oaken; the house has a hand-hewn Colonial aura.

She lives alone with her dog and five birds. "You're really thrown back on yourself in the country," she says. "It's 'me and my shadow and I.' There's something about being lonely and melancholy up here; I'm much more concentrated, but I'm restless right now—I'm terrifyingly single."

Outside a picture window, mourning doves are clustered on a snowy landscape; Clarke feeds them every day. "I love them," she says. "They're a little self-romanticizing. They're just birds like the rest of them out there, but they think they're more poetic than the others.

"I like to laugh a lot—even in my blackest mood. Everything seems to be in extremes. The same with the subject matter I choose. *Vienna* is frivolity, gaiety, beauty and elegance. On the other side, it's perversion and suicides. *The Penal Colony* and *Metamorphosis* are depressing and fatalistic, but Kafka's diaries are, at times, positively lyrical."

Describing the way she works, Clarke says, "It's like going into an attic blindfolded." She begins with found objects, raw material and people—and the work amasses. "Where one starts is never where one ends." She thinks through images. She is a watcher of people, pictures and places, looking for gestures—a stance or a smile—and drawing a behavioral profile from them. Everything—newspaper photographs, great works of art—goes into her "mental filing cabinet."

In rehearsal, she begins to convert gestures into movements, keeping a notebook that grows into the equivalent of a storyboard. Through all this, she looks for a "curve" for the audience to ride on. In the studio, rehearsing the Kafka piece, the dancers experimented with bizarre visual imagery, twisting themselves into what could be called Kafkaesque shapes: Rob Besserer's tall, athletic body contorted into a froglike posture; Paola Styron's delicate beauty was hidden behind a World War II gas mask, an attempt to simulate a Kafka insect. Anthony Holland and Brenda Currin read letters to and from Kafka, as adapted by the playwright Richard Greenberg, trying to find a way to make the epistles dramatic. As she encouraged self-expression, Clarke also communicated her own enjoyment of the process. She laughed with gusto, a rippling wave of laughter—always offset by her dark, sad eyes.

Then came the day of discovery. Three individual images—movement, textual and musical—converged into one seemingly contradictory but artistically harmonious vision. Besserer's "crooked man holding a hatchet" pose seen in a starkly lit small doorway was juxtaposed with a lyrical dance that Styron did with a cabbage on her head; the actors read excerpts from Kafka's letters to his fiancée Felice; and Richard Peaslee's score, evoking Czech folk music, was heard in the background. The director said that the images and the dramatic extracts expressed the emotional starvation of Kafka, his incompatibility with Felice and his "hunger for relationships—for a normal life." The total effect was "very contrapuntal—like a film out of sync."

Day by day, there were additions to the set. In the earth-bed were planted bentwood chairs, a 19th-century rocking horse, cabbages, Dresden china, silverware. On a wall a portrait of Kafka suddenly appeared—"askew." As with her previous pieces, Clarke was dovetailing events, looking for visual "counter-images," making the texture more and more complex, a process she describes as "densing."

Veering from self-confidence to self-questioning—and back again—she entered the crucial last tenth of the work on *The Hunger Artist*. Out came her "scissors and whip," as she refined the piece to its essential elements. Soon the company would move into St. Clement's, where rehearsals would continue. "When I get into the theater," Martha Clarke says, "I *really* come to life—under the pressure of lights, camera and action." ♦

IN DEFENSE OF VIRUSES

By Fred Hapgood

The infective agents that prey on every organism on Earth may also be the key to solving the mysteries of evolution and life itself.

The simplest forms of life, viruses are notorious as the cause of still-incurable human diseases. They are the only organisms on Earth, besides ourselves, that pose a serious threat to our survival. Most laymen would be happy to see viruses eliminated from this planet, but molecular biologists rush to their defense. They believe that viruses are a critical tool for understanding how cells function. There is speculation that viruses may be part of a global communications network allowing cells everywhere to engage in an extended "discussion" about what cells should do. It is even possible that viruses have played a key role in the evolution of life. "If viruses were nothing but bad news," says one molecular biologist, "you would expect cells to be taking great pains to evolve resistance to them. They do express resistance in some ways, but they also seem awfully accommodating in others."

Fred Hapgood is a Boston-based science writer whose work has appeared in The Atlantic, Omni *and* Smithsonian. *His book* Why Males Exist *examines the evolution of gender systems.*

To almost everyone, viruses are bracketed with bacteria as another sort of "germ," disagreeable and dangerous. Even many biologists share this opinion—"A virus is a piece of bad news wrapped in protein," said the late Sir Peter Medawar, Nobel laureate in medicine—and it is easy to see why. Viruses contribute to giving us hepatitis, influenza, measles, polio, rabies, yellow fever, AIDS and a host of other disorders. They are implicated in some cancers and leukemias, and in many autoimmune diseases, including multiple sclerosis and diabetes. They prey on every organism in the biosphere, including plants and even bacteria, and are a constant menace to livestock and agriculture. They give us warts.

Since the discovery of antibiotics, which are effective against bacteria, viruses have become the only organisms on the planet, besides ourselves, that pose a serious threat to our survival. If the means were to appear to wipe out every virus on Earth, most of us would be happy to push the button.

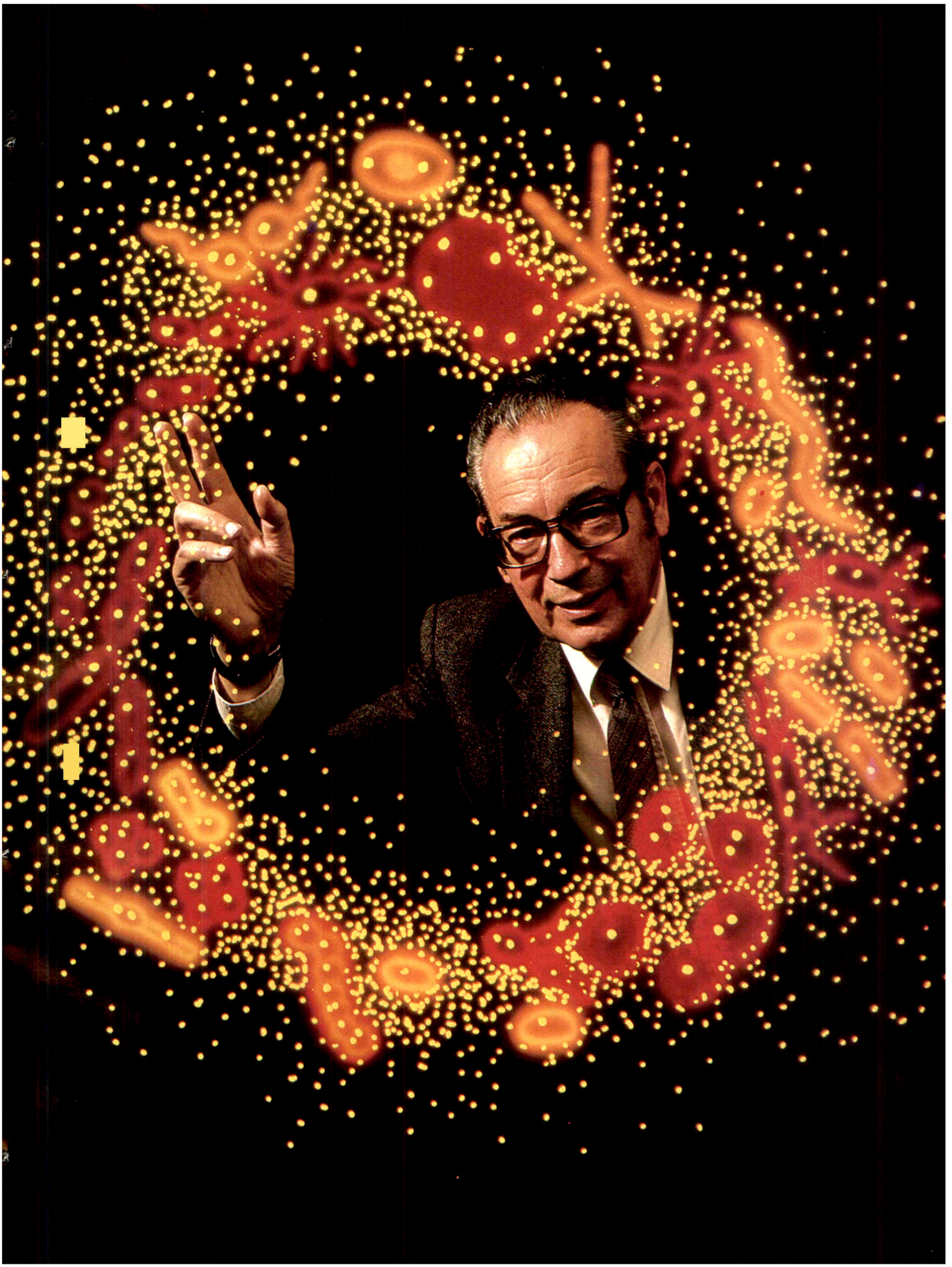
The only voices raised in defense would likely be those of scientists in molecular biology and the associated disciplines like cell biology and molecular genetics. To those researchers, viruses are one of the ornaments of the planet, a resource that has already benefited our civilization handsomely and that will certainly pay much larger dividends in the near future. Some in these professions even suspect that we might be all wrong about their role in the biosphere, that they are essential to evolution. At the extreme, there is the possibility that viruses are part of a great message-carrying service that allows all the cells on the planet to engage in an extended discussion about their trade, about how to be the best possible kind of cell.

Imagining how the debate would go, however, one guesses that the scientists might fail to carry their point. The pain that viruses cause is all too conspicuous, and their spe-

Microbiologist Sorin Sonea believes viruses may play a role in exchanging bits of genetic information (yellow dots), interconnecting all bacteria (red and yellow shapes) into a planetwide gene pool.

Photographs by Yoav Levy and Peter Angelo Simon/Phototake

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cial genius is too easy to undervalue. For what makes viruses as unique a life-form as we have on the planet—certainly what makes them so important to us, and potentially to every other living thing—is their simplicity. And, outside of those sciences and maybe monasteries, simplicity is not an easy virtue to appreciate. "So they're simple. So what?" a person might ask. And the answer to that question is not simple at all.

Since the early 19th century, scientists have been tantalized by the prospect of answering the biggest questions one can ask about the nature of life—where it comes from, how it proceeds, where it goes—on a physical level by describing what goes on within a living organism in terms of its fundamental parts. Until 50 years ago, this seemed impossible: biological entities appeared to have too much variety, complexity and unpredictability. Science prefers to work with standardized materials, and life was thought the enemy of standardization. Then, in 1935, Wendell Stanley, a biochemist at the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research in New York, crystallized viral particles. For a preparation to crystallize, its constituent particles have to be perfectly identical, with exactly the same shape, weight and chemical characteristics, separated from their neighbors by exactly the same distance. Nothing less biological, more dead, could be imagined. Living things are perpetually in flux and endlessly various. The crystallization experiments proved the contrary: that there are creatures that don't change, that don't grow, that come in standard models, like appliances off an assembly line. They suggested that there existed an experimental vehicle that, if scientists could only figure out how to mount it, might carry them deep into the nature of life.

The stories of the relation between viruses and their hosts have proved as quirky and unpredictable as any tales that biologists have to tell. Consider an animal cell over which is running a river of cellular fluid, perhaps lymph or plasma. A virus particle appears in the flux and is carried over the cell surface. Both the cell surface and the virus particle are thick with spikes that reach out into the streaming fluid. When the spikes of a virus and an animal cell touch, they bond, and the virus is drawn down onto the surface of the cell like a piece of flotsam snagged with a boathook. Some viruses, when they reach the cell membrane, pass directly through the cell wall like a ghost; others are engulfed, eaten, enfolded by the wall as though they were a delicacy of some kind.



Cytologist Ann de Bruyn Kops, who uses viruses to study how proteins are transported within cells, appears surrounded by glowing red proteins in a cell as it is seen through her microscope.

Once inside the cell the number of ways a virus can go about its business explodes. Building complex parts in a cell, including complete copies of viruses, is in some way like building a machine on a factory floor: it requires tools—the biochemical equivalent of ripsaws, drills, soldering irons, screwdrivers, rolls of tape and the like. For

example, MIT molecular biologist Jonathan King and his colleagues were the first to determine that the "tail" of one type of bacterial virus or phage is assembled inside a cell. First a "scaffold" protein is made. Then, building-block proteins are added one at a time until a "measuring tape" protein determines that the length is right. With the structure complete, the scaffold protein detaches, to be used again. Some viruses, like the herpes virus, come in with a hardware store of their own; others, such as the tobacco mosaic virus, make use of the cell's tools almost exclusively. Nobody knows why this difference exists or what it means.

Some viruses, when they enter a cell, are not infective—they have only one strand of nucleic acid and require two. Yet, for reasons that are still a mystery, the host cell immediately and obligingly repairs the virus, allowing the infection to begin. And finally, in what is certainly the ultimate in hospitality, there are hosts that integrate viral genes right into their own DNA so that thereafter, whenever the host cell replicates, a copy of the virus is made too. This type of virus is known as a retrovirus; AIDS can result from one member of this family.

"Without viruses," says David Knipe of Harvard University Medical School, "contemporary molecular biology would be unimaginable." A normal animal cell makes thousands of proteins; some infected cells make fewer than six—the viral proteins. From the perspective of someone trying to understand how cells make proteins, viruses impose a wonderful simplification on a confusing landscape. Further, it is hard to do experiments on a gene without having pure samples of the material, that is, without concentrations composed of millions of copies of a single, identical gene. Had there not been an organism like the virus around, many strains of which have less than a half-dozen genes, scientists would have had to try to get these pure extracts out of creatures with thousands of genes. And of course, all viruses of a strain are perfectly identical, an invaluable property for an experimental tool.

The services rendered by viruses continue to this day. In Knipe's laboratory at Harvard, Anne de Bruyn Kops, a graduate student in cell biology, is concerned with the problem of protein transport—the complex traffic of protein molecules moving about a cell with apparent, but as yet inexplicable, order. "My particular interest," she says, "is in how the proteins used by the cell get from where they are assembled to where they are needed. One idea was that proteins just circulated randomly around the cell until they happened to bump into the right site. But we now know there are too many proteins, and they arrive where they are needed too quickly, for this to be the only possibility."

De Bruyn Kops was considering using the herpes simplex 1 virus to trace the movement of proteins within a working cell. When I met her, she had just prepared a set of three slides to help her decide precisely how useful such an assistant might be—to see how accurately the virus proteins moved about in the cell—and was about to examine them. She was looking for evidence of whether virus proteins made in a cell would travel to the cell's gene-copying centers. To find out, she had stained her slides with dyes that would show the genes in red and the proteins in green when illuminated with different wavelengths of light. Those three slides represented not only 12 hours of the most delicate and exacting labor, but a test of a technique that might influence her research for months.

De Bruyn Kops placed the first slide under a spectacular binocular microscope. As the slide began to fluoresce, it looked like luminous rose veils thrown carelessly over one another, through which were strung dozens of untwinkling bright dots of ruby light. The veils of light were cells that had once belonged, many dozens of cell-generations ago, to the skin of a kidney from an African green monkey—"Only because those cells happen to lie nice and flat," de Bruyn Kops explained. The ruby dots represented the copies that each cell had made of its genes just before being killed for this experiment.

De Bruyn Kops pressed a light switch and the fluorescence shifted from red to green as a new wavelength illuminated the dye for proteins. Now, amid glowing green veils there were bright dots of emerald, proteins made by the viral genes. De Bruyn Kops moved the switch back and forth, from green to red to green. "What do you see?" she asked. There could be no question: the ruby and emerald stars mapped over each other almost perfectly. Somehow the virus had managed to discover the address of almost all the places in the nucleus that copied genes and had sent its proteins to precisely those sites. Or, to put it the other way, somehow the cell had picked out the viral proteins and transported them to its gene-copying factories. De Bruyn Kops now had a narrowly defined, simple system in which to explore the mysteries of protein transport.

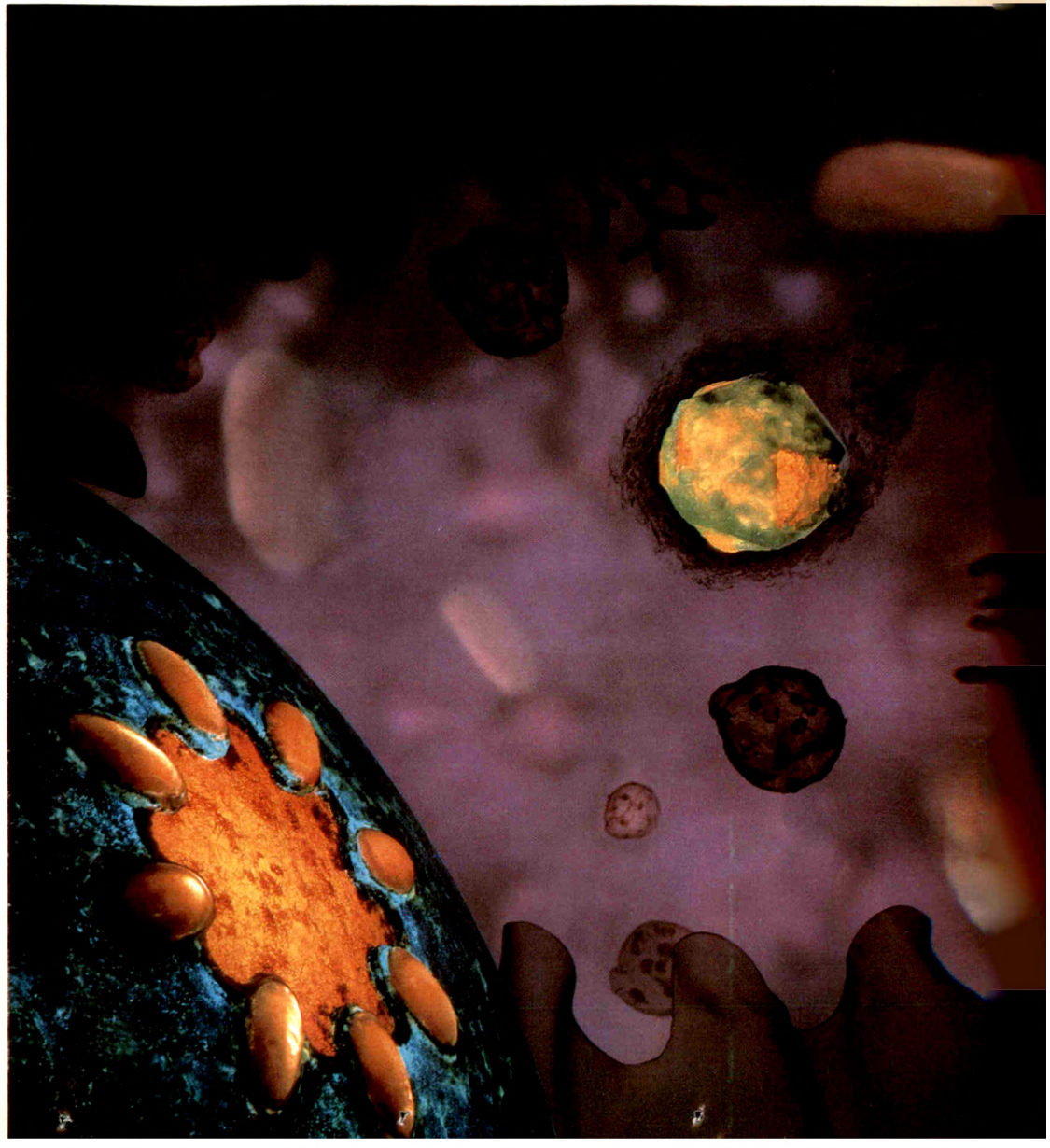
In large measure, the science of viruses stands at the same threshold as de Bruyn Kops—the knowledge at hand allows us to explore the big questions but does not answer them. There is not, as yet, even an agreement about the precise relation of viruses and genes. Traditionally and naturally, viruses have been seen as alien invaders competing against us for the manufacturing facilities in our cells. The theories of their origin have reflected this feeling of otherness and distance. Perhaps the most common concept has been that viruses began as bacteria and over time, through natural selection, gained such skill in the manipulation of their hosts that they were able to strip themselves down to the minimum for reproduc-

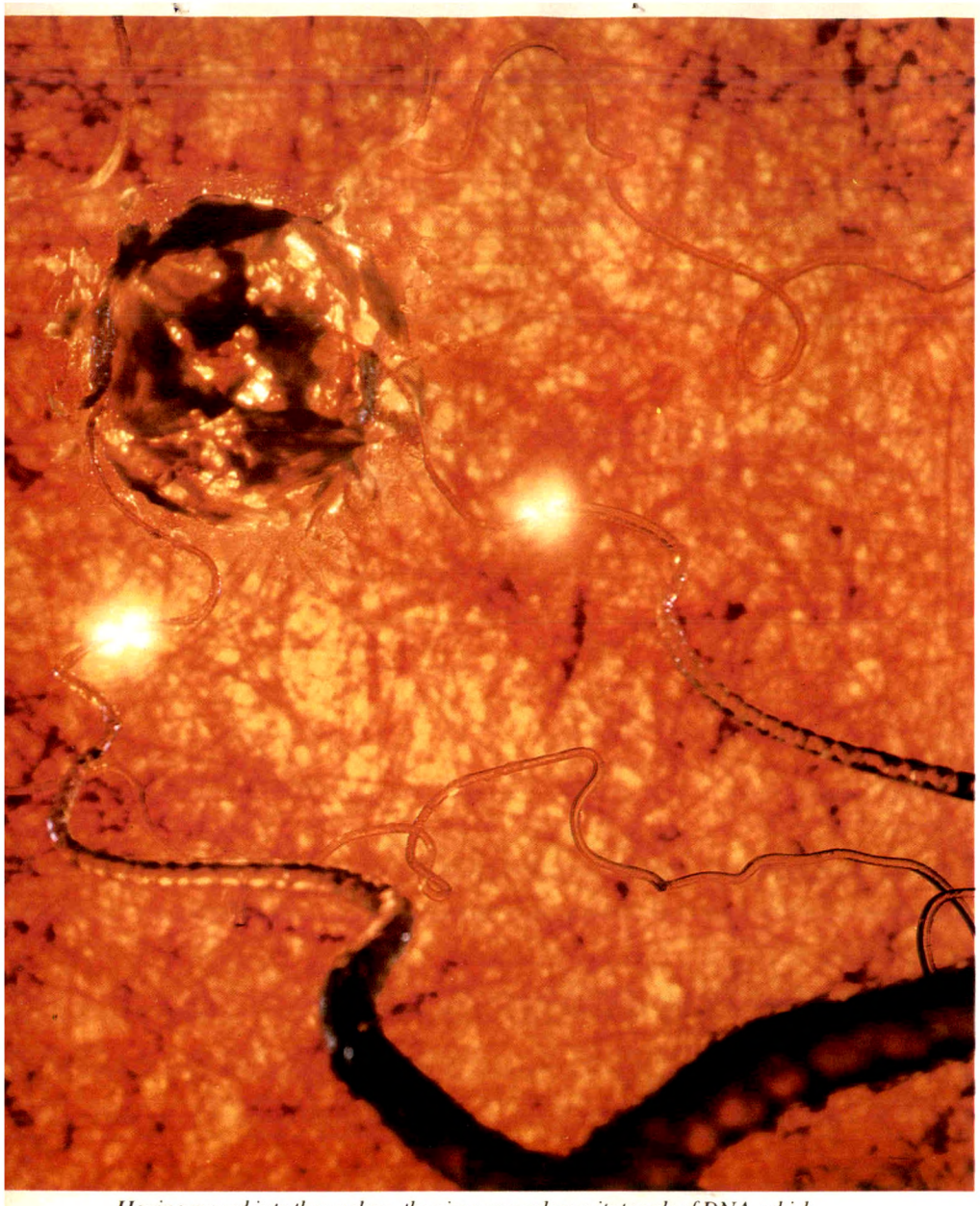
How one virus tricks a cell into making more viruses

The photographs on these pages, using models based on recent research discoveries, show how one type of virus (called retrovirus) infiltrates a cell and turns it into a factory for making more viruses. The virus moves across the protein-studded landscape of a white blood cell's surface, contacting a spiky receptor to which one of its own knobby proteins sticks. This chemically unlocks the cell, which may do little to defend itself.

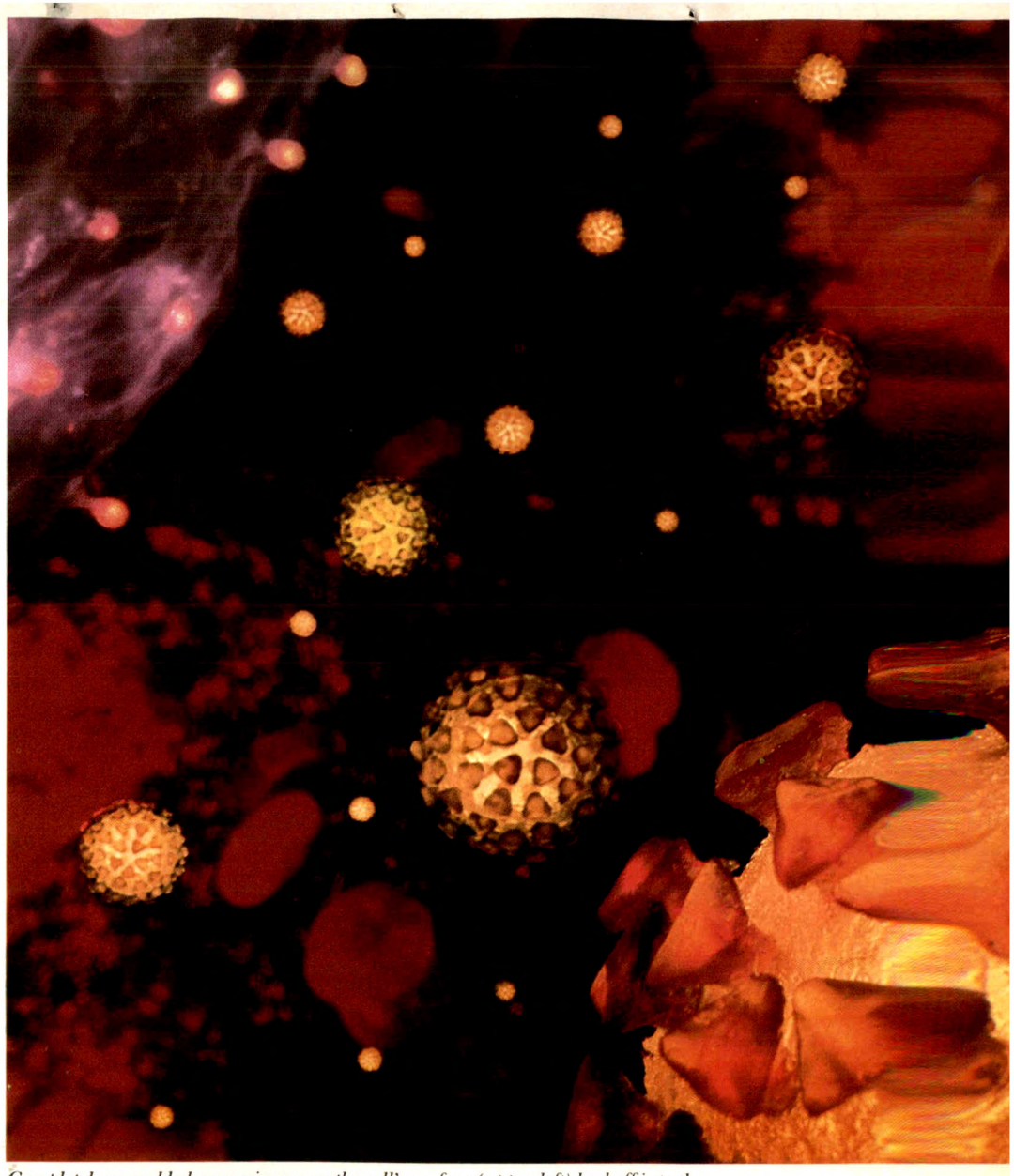


After the virus's outer coat fuses with the cell, the inner container of the virus, a protein core, is released into the maze of granules and protein structures inside the cell. Here, the disintegrating core moves toward one of the pore holes in the nucleus (lower left). Before entering the nucleus, the core lets in enzymes from the cell, which act to convert the viral nucleic acid (in a form called RNA) into DNA, like that of the cell's own genes.





Having moved into the nucleus, the virus core releases its tangle of DNA, which is spliced into the cell's DNA (at the flashpoints in the photograph). As the cell follows directions from its own genes in making proteins, it also follows those of the viral genes, making proteins for new cores and packing them with new viral RNA. Cores then migrate to the cell surface, where virus protein coats are produced to surround the cores.



Completely assembled, new viruses on the cell's surface (upper left) bud off into the bloodstream, free to find and attack other host cells. The greenish-hued virus at the center represents a mutant, which may produce a new strain of virus, as sometimes occurs. The entire life cycle, from entry to budding off, takes a few days. However, a retrovirus may splice its DNA into a cell's and remain dormant—even for years—before replicating.

tion, the genes themselves. Another theory points out that there must have been a time early in the origin of life, when living things, or what were to become living things, were nothing but large interacting molecules. Perhaps viruses have survived essentially unchanged from that period, or at least far less changed than we.

Both of these theories, and others addressing the same question, have stressed how *different* viruses are. Thus one of the more unexpected discoveries made by cell biologists has been the number of perfectly normal features of the cell that resemble, sometimes very closely, viral structures and behavior. Discovery of similarities between parts of a normal cell and viruses has led many scientists to speculate that viruses might have arisen as parts of our own cells that broke free and went out into the world.

No matter how they arose, hints are beginning to appear that the relation between viruses and our genes has far more to it than the simple matter of genetic conquest. Viruses not only carry their own genes from cell to cell but those of other creatures as well. "Sometimes," says Michael Syvanen, a molecular biologist at Harvard Medical School, "a piece of the genes of the host gets trapped or caught inside a viral shell, replacing the viral genes. These shells are then released. If one is taken up by a new host, the genes are set free in the cells of that host. Since there are no viral genes in the shell, those cells are not infected, and sometimes the new gene is incorporated into the genes of the second host. Bacterial resistance to antibiotics is accomplished by bacteria of different species exchanging genetic information. But lab experiments have also shown that this exchange could, in principle, be mediated by phages. Animal viruses have been found in which some of their genes have been replaced with animal genes, presumably those of a previous host."

Syvanen suspects that this phenomenon plays an important role in evolution, though he emphasizes that this has not yet been proved. Nor is he alone: Sorin Sonea and Maurice Panisset, microbiologists at the University of Montreal, have written a book arguing that all bacteria are interconnected by viruslike organisms into a single, planetwide gene pool. "Thus the bacterial world functions as a vast communications network to promote life in all possible niches of the planet by establishing associations of different types and genetic permutations whenever conditions are favorable," they write. Lynn Margulis, a bacteriologist at Boston University, has hailed the book as "a manifesto for a new bacteriology."

Whether or not viral infections serve the interests of the host cell in nature, there are a number of research teams hoping that they can be made to do so as a medical treatment. Many diseases—Alzheimer's, Huntington's chorea, perhaps manic-depressive illness—are caused at least in part by gene defects and genetic damage. An ideal therapy would be to load up millions of virus shells with healthy genes and then infect the relevant tissues—brain or liver or skin—so that the cell would incorporate the new genes into its own DNA.

Richard Mulligan's lab at the Whitehead Institute at MIT is working with beta thalassemia, a genetic disease that affects the production of hemoglobin in children. In his lab, such virus-mediated gene repair has been done with mice but not yet with humans. "What people are doing now are long, exhaustive sequences of experiments trying to figure out exactly what to put in the viral shell," he says. "When we have that resolved there may be other problems, but most of us feel that in 10 to 20 years this type of therapy is going to have a big effect on the practice of medicine."

One reason for thinking there may be undiscovered chapters to the story of viruses is their simplicity. There is so little to a virus, and so much sophistication in a cell, that it seems somewhat strange that cells don't do more to prevent these genetic takeovers, especially since viruses rely on their hosts for so much. "If viruses were nothing but bad news," says Syvanen, "you would expect cells to be taking great pains to evolve resistance to them. And they do express resistance in some ways, but they also seem awfully accommodating in others." For example, viruses self-assemble inside the host. An evolutionary biologist would surely predict that cells ought to be selected to interfere with that synthesis, inhibiting the spread of infection through the system. Yet somehow evolution has not taken that turn.

"We are now with respect to viruses where the 19th-century bacteriologists were with respect to bacteria," summarizes Hyman Hartman, a microbiologist at the University of California, Berkeley. Hartman has written a paper arguing that viruses are important in the origin of species—that they can alter the genes of an infected population such that its members can mate only with one another and not with other members of that species. This would split up a species into separate mating pools, one way that new species are born. In the 19th century, "the only bacteria known were those that caused diseases," he goes on. "All the symbiotic associations that living things have with bacteria, including the degree to which bacteria drive the great geochemical cycles of the planet, were unknown. Today, the viruses really known to us are those that cause problems. But that's because that's the only way we have, so far, of finding them. Perhaps our vulnerability to pathogenic viruses is just the price that must be paid if we are to continue to accept other, less visible, benefits. In any case, I'm sure that so far all we have seen is the tip of a large and very interesting iceberg." ♦

Microbiologist Michael Syvanen studies bacterial colonies that arise from viral transfer of genes. Viruses can convey antibiotic resistance from one species to another. Syvanen thinks viruses may have a similar role in carrying genes between plant species.



AMERICAN POLITICS IN A '88 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION YEAR

"The ultimate rulers of American democracy are not a President and senators and congressmen and government officials, but the voters," said Franklin Roosevelt in 1938. Fifty years later—and as they have done every four years—these ultimate rulers will exercise their power in a dramatic way by electing a President and presenting a mandate for domestic and foreign policy decisions.

The presidential election of 1988 promises to be one of the most significant in the 20th century. For the first time since 1968, an incumbent President will not be on the ballot. And many experts think the United States is at a crucial point in its political history. Will the Republican Party retain its dominance of presidential politics and continue its philosophy of limited government in the economic sphere? Or will the baby-boom generation that came of political age in the 1960s opt for a more activist government under the Democrats? What is the mood of the electorate? What are some of the issues that will be uppermost in people's minds as they decide whom to vote for? This special section of *The American Review* examines these and other aspects of politics in a presidential-election year.

In the first article, political analysts Michael Barone and Grant Ujifusa discuss current attitudes among voters in an excerpt from their *Almanac of American Politics 1988*. Barone, a senior writer for *The Washington Post*, and Ujifusa, a senior writer at Macmillan Publishing Company, portray the American people as generally satisfied with the direction of the country, but not complacent. The second article, "The Politics of Opportunity," focuses on voter concern about an issue deeply rooted in the American consciousness: upward mobility, both economic and social. The third article, "Religion and American Values," analyzes another subject that many pollsters say will be high on the voters' agenda.

The Mood of the Electorate

Two incisive political pundits paint a broad picture of American voters in the 1988 presidential election year.



By Michael Barone and Grant Ujifusa

Americans approach the 1988 election knowing that it will change their politics and, to some extent their national life—but no one is sure just how. There is more than the usual uncertainty, more than the usual inability to know who will win each party nomination and which party's nomination will turn out to be worth winning. That uncertainty was one of the things that made the 1960 election [Richard Nixon vs. John Kennedy] so thrilling that it inspired the highest voter turnout of the 20th century.

But Americans follow a presidential election not just for the reasons they watch a football game. They know that the results of the elections will make a difference in people's lives. The difficulty with the 1988 election is that they cannot be sure of what those differences will be. In 1959 and 1960 Americans had a fairly clear idea of what the domestic policies of a Democratic and a Republican administration would be; they knew enough about the parties' foreign policies to know that they would be more similar than different; they knew that both were exceedingly cautious about interfering with cultural mores. Americans in 1960 were unhappy with the facts around them: the economy was in its third year of recession; American power in the world seemed to be slipping. But voters felt confident that there was a formula for governing. If the out-party candidate was promising to "get the country moving again," and the in-party candidate was saying he'd do that better, both did so knowing that most Americans were pretty sure that they knew how that could be done.

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Americans approach the 1988 election in just the opposite frame of mind. They have been reasonably pleased with the facts around them. But they have no confidence that anyone has a formula for governing. Satisfaction with government, politics and other institutions has been on the rise in the 1980s, even before the economic recovery began in 1983; the dips in confidence have not produced the kind of dissatisfaction seen in the 1970s. Yet Americans feel distinctly uneasy about the future, not because they are sure it will be dreadful, but because they're not quite certain what it will be like.

A Guarded Satisfaction

No one has a macroeconomic theory that explains what has happened to the U.S. economy over the last dozen years—much less one that anyone is comfortable relying on to prescribe policy for the future. With low inflation, huge job growth and negligible unemployment of heads of household, the American economy in 1987 could be labelled a success. But enormous federal budget deficits, widening trade deficits and mounting personal and corporate debt are important problems.

Satisfaction, sometimes guarded satisfaction, with the facts; anxiety about the absence of formulas for governing: this is the mood now. Americans have been pleased with the trends and leadership they have had in the 1980s, but they understand they will not be precisely replicated in the 1990s, and they do not want them to be replicated precisely anyway; they can easily think of an improvement here or a different solution there.

The good results of the 1980s have come mostly from a divided government, and voters understand instinctively not only that it will be difficult

to replace Ronald Reagan with a President who has all his positive qualities plus some that he lacks, but also that it will be hard to strike the same balance between the Reagan Administration and Congress that existed for six of the first seven years of the 1980s. What is striking on looking back is that this divided government produced solutions for problems that politicians were supposed to be unable to solve. Inflation was reduced from nearly 20 percent to almost zero. The giddy and constant rise in domestic government spending, a rise that seemed to be sucking growth out of the private economy, was slowed.

Not all problems were addressed. Government budget deficits remained high. But in 1987 Congress and the Reagan Administration addressed important issues, primarily in trying to devise some sort of "workfare," requiring recipients to work for welfare payments, to replace the current welfare system.

This is not to say that Americans are suddenly bursting with pride about their politicians. But they are quite proud about their country. They are bursting with pride about many of their states and local communities, and they have been giving higher job ratings to their politicians and their governments than they have since the years of Vietnam and Watergate.

The nomination system has been opened up in a way that [the 1950s] might scarcely have imagined. It has been transformed from a process in which a handful of leaders exercised a dominant voice, if not outright control, over their party's nomination choice, to one in which thousands of party workers and millions of primary-election voters decide the outcome.

—**Harrison Donnelly**
Political Journalist

A Vote for Continuity

In 1976 and 1980 Americans sought Presidents whom they perceived as lacking the defects of those who preceded: ordinary citizens rather than Washington insiders, honest ingenues rather than wily political maneuverers. Hence the spectacle, which surely people in the future will think odd, of the richest and most powerful country in the world electing as its President a peanut farmer, Jimmy Carter, and a movie actor, Ronald Reagan. In 1984 Americans, for the first time in 20 years, enthusiastically and ungrudgingly returned their President to office, and looked ahead for a successor who shared his strengths rather than one who lacked his weaknesses. In 1986 they cast another vote for continuity in governing, reelecting the third highest number of members of the House of Representatives in American history. They ousted the Republicans from control of the Senate but cast almost precisely the same number of votes for each party as they had when the same seats were up six years before. They also installed as state governors leaders who had proven in state and city government their competence at managing. In an America full of local patriotisms and bubbling optimism, Americans once again had confidence in their government and their political leaders.

Beneath the turmoil and clash of everyday American politics, beneath the sometimes apocalyptic rhetoric, Americans have reached something like a consensus about basic values and policies, and something close to a consensus on the differences they are willing to tolerate in each other. The fashionable talk of a politics of alienation, angst and anomie has faded, as the 1984 and 1986 elections revealed Americans to themselves as reasonably pleased with the nation they have come to be.

The United States is also a nation that is rich, even while so much of the political debate consists of complaints about the economy. But the fact is that the U.S. economy, which seemed stalled in the 1970s, has grown in the 1980s. By 1986, an economy that floundered in two recessions in 1978-82 was producing a gross national product (GNP) 18 percent above the 1978 level. The American economy generated 11 million more jobs over that period, and fully 61 percent of Americans over 15 were in the work force—higher than ever before. Since the end of the prosperous 1960s, GNP was up in real terms more than 50 percent, and GNP per capita was up 35 percent.

War fosters big government and cultural unity. Peace and prosperity foster less government and more cultural variety. The formula that Americans developed by 1960 was derived from their success in dealing with the economic collapse of the '30s and the total war of the '40s. That formula was predictably less successful in dealing with the economic boom since the early 1960s and the era of peace since the early '70s. The old formula took cultural unity for granted: it was crafted for a nation of conformists. The new formula, toward which Americans are groping in the late 1980s, has a different requirement. It can afford to—must, since it can't be changed by fiat—accept cultural variety as a given. In the late 1980s, Americans seem to seek a return to a mood of national unity, a communitarian spirit, without threatening their cultural diversity.

If Americans yearn for a more cohesive spirit, they also are looking for a more vibrant economy. As 1988 began, the cry heard everywhere on the political spectrum was "competitiveness." Alarmed by the trade deficit, fearful of being stampeded into destructive protectionism, worried that the long economic recovery could not be sustained, politicians of both parties were trying to come up with lists of proposals that would be seen as making America more competitive in world markets. Implicit was a sense that the Republican policy

of encouraging production through purely individual incentives was not enough to produce continuing and widespread economic growth, any more than the Democrats' policy of redistributing income through government action. If wages had been propped up too high and the quality of workmanship allowed to deteriorate too much in the 1970s to make American products competitive in a world market, then it was still not obvious that at least some of the most visible characteristics of the current market-driven economy were repairing the damage.

The primary model—and the threat—Americans are contemplating is the success of Japan and East Asia: success that depends heavily on unified national efforts to achieve common goals. By contrast, the models that caught Americans' eyes around 1960 came from Europe. American liberals cast longing eyes on Western Europe's generous welfare states and argued that the United States was backward for not having them. Liberals and conservatives alike worried that Europe was growing more rapidly than the United States (it was still making up ground lost in World War II). At that point Japan and East Asia did not present alternative models. Japan seemed to be going the way of Western Europe. The other countries of the East Asia rim seemed bereft of resources. Americans looked across the Atlantic, and decided that they needed more state involvement in the economy, more social-welfare protections, more money pumping into the hands of middle- and lower-income citizens to stimulate consumer demand. The European, Keynesian, social democratic model seemed the wave of the future.

Quite the opposite today. As the best-seller lists show, Americans are fascinated with the Japanese success, and particularly the tendency of various groups and social strata of Japanese to work together: government planning with business, labor cooperating with management. Americans are looking across the Pacific, and deciding that they need somewhat less state involvement in the economy, no more social-welfare protections, greater savings and investment, and more cooperation and fewer adversary relationships.

What is interesting about the response of American politicians to the "competitiveness" idea is that no real dispute exists between the parties. All the politicians are talking about similar goals: beefing up America, opening up markets in Japan and East Asia, driving down the federal and trade deficits. Politics no longer seems to be a matter of the parties advocating different policies. Rather, the parties are competing to see which one can become most closely identified with the same set of ideas.

If competitiveness is one area where a desire for communitarian action has surfaced, another possible area may be where the communitarian economic and moral impulses intersect. This merging of economic and moral issues has defined workfare: moving welfare mothers toward jobs by providing economic aid (child care, medical insurance) and moral guidance. The idea—best articulated by New York University political scientist Lawrence Mead in *Beyond Entitlement: The Social Obligations of Citizenship*—that there are reciprocal obligations here, society's and the welfare recipient's, has struck a chord with Republicans and Democrats alike.

Consensus on Education

Then there is education reform. The insistence on minimum standards was pioneered in the South, where educational levels have long been low, and politicians and voters realized they must upgrade their labor forces if they want continuing economic growth; the same lesson is now being applied in the North, where for some years the idea gained ground that the purpose of education was to liberate a child's instincts to allow him untrammelled self-expression. Now Americans may be reaching consensus on other educational issues. Advocates of making English the national language are coming to understand that that implies an obligation to teach English to those who speak other languages; advocates of welcoming immigrants to the United States have come to understand that they must be schooled in the nation's language and culture if they are to have a fair chance to rise.

Americans are beginning to rediscover the tradition of government aiding and therefore encouraging and honoring those who are upwardly mobile. This tradition is embodied in the fabulously successful post-World War II policies of the G.I. Bill of Rights (which paid educational expenses of veterans), federal home-mortgage guarantees and the family allowances created by steeply progressive income-tax rates combined with generous exemptions for dependents. These are three policies that helped change the grade-school-educated, renter, economically stagnant America of the 1930s into the college-educated, homeowner, economically dynamic America of the 1960s. These specific policies, of course, cannot be precisely replicated in today's different nation. But they suggest the direction a communitarian-minded politics might go.

A communitarian politics may run into difficulties in the atomistic, culturally diverse nation created by a generation or more of peace and prosperity. Americans are not ready to be called upon to commit themselves to some form of national service, nor is there much talk about a military draft. The national pride of the 1980s, symbolized by the Los Angeles Olympic ceremonies of 1984 and the Statue of Liberty commemoration of 1986, has this weakness: it asks too little from the nation's citizens. True, it is not the ordinary habit of political candidates to ask things; they usually promise. But there are times when satisfaction with the system places the premium not just on the candidate who promises but even more on the one who inspires. Americans' satisfaction with the facts they see around them gives the politicians of 1988 an opportunity—quite possibly gives them the incentive—to come up with a formula for governing that goes beyond addressing individual grievances and asserts a communitarian purpose. ♦

The Politics of Opportunity

Belief in upward social mobility has always influenced how Americans vote.

By Robert W. Hodge and Steven Lagerfeld

Students of American history and literature often encounter the phrase, "the American dream," which has many meanings, from the mundane to the religious. Almost everyone would agree that one of the meanings of the American dream is a vision of upward mobility, both social and economic. To put it another way, there are poor Americans, but very few of them expect to be poor for long. Rags-to-riches stories are so deeply ingrained in the nation's heritage that poor people have seldom attempted to achieve through class action (such as forming a "workers' party") what they believe can be accomplished through simple hard work. Thus, in the United States, economic issues seldom pit one voting bloc against another, as if only a limited number of people could succeed at one time. Throughout history, American voters have generally wanted a combination of national prosperity plus individual opportunities, "not a sharpening of class conflict or a general redistribution of wealth." The belief in "the American dream" of economic and social mobility has always been one of the most significant factors when voters cast their ballot for a President, and every indication is that the politics of opportunity will be equally important in the 1988 election.

Robert W. Hodge is a professor of sociology at the University of Southern California. Steven Lagerfeld is senior editor of The Wilson Quarterly.



Trying to account for the absence of a self-conscious, politically cohesive working class in the United States, Karl Marx observed in 1852 that "though classes, indeed, already exist, they have not yet become fixed, but continually change and interchange their elements in a constant state of flux."

There have been other explanations.

In *Why Is There No Socialism in the United States?* (1906), Werner Sombart, a left-leaning German economist, noted that the American belief in political equality, in "the efficacy of the People's will," firmly attached almost all citizens to the existing political system. Like Tocqueville 70 years earlier, Sombart also put great store in the easy American sense of social equality. "The worker," he wrote, "is not being reminded at every turn that he belongs to a 'lower' class." Moreover, American wage earners lived rather well compared to their European counterparts, and their standard of living was rising. "All Socialist utopias," he observed, "came to nothing on roast beef and apple pie."

But the most important ingredient of all in the American "proletarian psyche," in Sombart's view, was the opportunity to "escape into freedom." Reluctantly, he concluded that there was some truth to the "rags to riches" sagas that he had heard everywhere in the United States during a visit in 1904. "A far from insignificant number of ordinary workers ascend the rungs of the ladder of the capitalist hierarchy to the top or almost to the top." Others rose more modestly, he noted, but rose nonetheless.

Socialism's Scant Appeal

In the years since, both American and foreign scholars have offered fresh theories to explain the scant appeal of egalitarian socialism in the United States. Among them: 1) the continual influx of various immigrant groups hindered working-class solidarity; 2) enormous geographic mobility hampered efforts to unite workers; 3) American socialist leaders were inept organizers and divided among themselves.

Of course, the United States does have social classes and, more obviously, class politics. Frequently, class tensions have been played out in debates over taxes or, especially since the 1960s, welfare.

But what most Americans do *not* entertain is the belief that individual status and earning opportunities are fixed for life. Among Europeans that belief has been far more common. In 1926, Austrian-born economist Joseph Schumpeter defied Europe's conventional wisdom when he compared the social strata to various rooms in a hotel, "always full, but always [full] of different people."

Historians doubt that individual opportunities have actually been vast-

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ly greater in the United States than in other Western industrial societies. But sociologists, studying more precise 20th-century data, conclude that America's current advantages are at least "statistically significant." In any event, the vision of upward mobility retains its popular appeal. It bridges two often contradictory ideas: equality (discouraging overt distinctions of rank) and individualism, which tugs the other way, encouraging enterprise, self-reliance and success based on merit.

The belief in equal opportunity, that everybody begins with a roughly equal chance to get ahead, is what eases the tension between equality and individualism. A rising standard of living, allowing ordinary workers as well as the rich to own cars, television sets and houses, is essential to the general sense of opportunity. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, social mobility among the employed did not decrease. However, massive unemployment, widespread farm foreclosures and a sharp drop in living standards for millions of citizens (but not all citizens) provided harsh reminders of what had always been (and still is) true: in America, as elsewhere, opportunities are not equal for all.

There were fears of open class warfare. But in 1932 the voters turned to Franklin D. Roosevelt, a Hudson Valley patrician, who promised on one hand to help the "forgotten man" and, on the other, to slash government spending by 25 percent. Roosevelt, observed political columnist Walter Lippmann, "is no crusader. He is no tribune of the people. He is no enemy of entrenched privilege."

The era's economic hard times brought the tiny American Communist Party few new supporters, except among writers and intellectuals; Norman Thomas's milder Socialist Party claimed a grand total of 15,000 members in 1932, the year Roosevelt was first elected.

Instead of doctrinaire leftists, the Great Depression spawned a host of popular demagogues. The most popular of the new leaders was Huey P. Long, the colorful Louisiana "Kingfish," who promised to make "Every Man a King."

A spellbinding orator who served as Louisiana's governor and then as a U.S. senator, Long gained a national following by blaming the nation's ills on a cabal of Wall Street "plutocrats." "All of our businesses have been taken over by a few men," he thundered. If they were not stopped, there would be "no profitable enterprise left to anyone except them."

Long promised to raise living standards through a scheme to "Share Our Wealth." New taxes would gradually eliminate all personal fortunes over three or four million dollars; inheritances would be limited to one million dollars. The tax revenues would, he claimed, supply a basic household nest egg of $5000 for every needy family—"enough for a home, an automobile, a radio and the ordinary conveniences"—and a minimum income of about $2000 annually. As one contemporary study indicated, even stiffer taxes than the ones Long proposed would have produced only a bit more than $400 per needy family. No matter. Millions of Americans were ready to believe that a tiny upper class had grabbed a greater share of the nation's wealth, an inequity that "soak the rich" taxes could remedy.

By the mid-1930s, the Kingfish loomed as a possible third-party candidate running against FDR. That ended with Long's death in 1935.

Dangerous as he may have seemed, concludes historian Alan Brinkley, Long was not quite as radical as he often sounded. His followers were not workers aiming to topple "the bosses," but mostly members of the small-town lower-middle class, struggling to hold on to hard-won respectability. Long's attacks on Wall Street's "plutocrats" echoed a tradition of American politics going back to the Revolution—opposition to concentrated economic or political power. (Indeed, Long also criticized FDR for accumulating too much power for his New Deal government agencies in Washington.) The Kingfish harked back to a simpler America where even the least well-off could hope to improve their lot by going into business for themselves. "Where is the corner groceryman?" he asked the Senate. The "little independent businesses operated by middle-class people have been fading out as the concentration of wealth grows like a snowball."

Attacks on "bigness" would recur under different circumstances, from the Left and the Right, later in the 20th century. The villains would be giant institutions—variously public or corporate—which seemed to threaten not only the American egalitarian ethos, but the spirit of individual enterprise and self-reliance.

In June 1935, before Long died, FDR decided to "steal Huey's thunder" with a tax program of his own, the Second New Deal. In proposing new taxes—stiff levies on big busi-

In 1980, a survey found that 51 percent of Americans explicitly preferred a situation in which no one party controls both the Presidency and the two houses of Congress; only 36 percent preferred one-party control of both branches. By 1984, these percentages were 54 to 39. The public is firmly attached to the separation of powers and to interbranch-interparty checks and balances.

—**Daniel L. Horowitz**
Professor of Law, Duke University

ness, an inheritance tax and sharply higher income taxes on the well-to-do—FDR appealed to a mixture of class resentment and fears of "bigness." "Social unrest and a deepening sense of unfairness," he declared, "are dangers to our national life which we must minimize by rigorous methods."

Eventually, Congress approved FDR's Second New Deal. But the President's new tax proposals, denounced by conservatives as "class legislation," were whittled down. No inheritance tax was passed. The top income-tax rate did jump to 79 percent, but only one man in the country (John D. Rockefeller) fell into this bracket.

Many historians now conclude that Roosevelt's soak-the-rich plan was largely a symbolic gesture. Overall, writes FDR biographer William Leuchtenburg, the wealthy claimed about the same share of the nation's income after the Second New Deal as they had before.

Roosevelt's reelection in 1936 firmed up the New Deal coalition and signaled the political realignment of Americans more closely along socioeconomic lines. Business contributions to the Democratic Party dropped sharply. Blacks deserted the Republican Party of Abraham Lincoln, and fiery labor leader John L. Lewis, until then a Republican, aligned his powerful union with the Democratic Party. Blacks and labor have remained more or less firmly attached to the Democrats ever since. But class politics, even the polite form practiced by FDR, never seems to get very far in the United States. The defection of conservative southern Democrats in Congress from Roosevelt's coalition in 1937, coupled with Republican gains in the congressional elections of 1938, wrote *finis* to any possibility of a radical Third New Deal.

After a decade of economic hardship, Americans still longed for a restoration of national prosperity and individual opportunities, not a sharpening of class conflict or a general redistribution of wealth. Such sentiment has always helped bar the way to class-based political parties, common in Europe. Yet, curiously, the nation's widespread belief in individual opportunity has never spurred elected officials to promote individual upward mobility.

In the United States, politicians hail the "common man," not the "self-made" man. The ideal of the self-made man and "making it" has been nurtured mostly by popular authors and magazines, clergymen, and business leaders. Politicians promise prosperity (or a social-welfare "safety net") for all; to promote openly the success of some individuals, but not others, is to court political oblivion.

The G.I. Bill and the American Dream

After the Great Depression, however, the federal government did begin to boost the long-term prospects of selected classes of individuals. The first measure to do so was the G.I. Bill of Rights (passed by Congress in 1944), which provided a massive array of benefits for World War II veterans. It was intended only partly as a reward to the returning soldiers. More to the point, as a government report said, it provided a "solution of a problem as old as war—the returning soldier embittered against the society he fought to protect."

At the time, it also seemed possible that after the World War II boom ended, the Depression would simply resume. The G.I. Bill, by pumping money into the economy and keeping veterans out of the job market, would help to prevent such a disaster. The bill offered a smorgasbord of benefits, such as low-interest home mortgages, but the most important, symbolically, was generous aid for the college bound. All told, 2.2 million World War II veterans went to college on the G.I. Bill, and another 5.6 million attended vocational and technical schools. They conceived of the "Good Life" chiefly in terms of a happy family (with three children), a comfortable home and two cars. It was just about what Huey Long had promised their parents during the 1930s.

The wartime military, by throwing men of varied ethnic backgrounds together, had acted as a giant mixer of the social classes, at least among whites. With the return of prosperity during the late 1940s, Americans seemed to strike a new balance between egalitarianism and competitive individualism. As politicians saw it, the United States would "level up": everybody—everybody white, that is—would be middle-class.

In this optimistic postwar climate there was no significant agitation for redistribution of the wealth, and hardly any public discussion of what had happened to the "one-third of a nation" that Franklin Roosevelt had found to be ill-housed and ill-fed.

Assessing the political landscape in 1952, shortly before the election that put Dwight D. Eisenhower in the White House, political scientist Samuel Lubell argued that there were now two middle classes. One was older, small-town, mostly New England Yankee (or from established immigrant groups), "instinctively" Republican; the other, composed mostly of first- and second-generation Jews, Irish, and other urban ethnics who had "made it" since the Depression, was also conservative, but wedded by sentiment to the Democratic Party.

"We are witnessing an almost complete refutation of the Marxian thesis," Lubell concluded. "Our class struggle, if it can be called that, arises not from the impoverishment of the masses but from their progress in postwar America."

During the 1930s, intellectuals had decried the nation's poverty and clamored for collective action by the masses; now, they recoiled from the prosperous "mass man" of the 1950s, and jeered at his spiritual impoverishment. Among the most famous of the many books in this vein was *The Lonely Crowd* (1950), by sociologist David Riesman of Yale University and two colleagues. They warned that the sturdy, enterprising, "inner-directed" man of the past was rapidly being replaced by a joyless, conformist, "other-directed" type. The cause of this new phenomenon: "a centralized and bureaucratized society." Or, in a word, *bigness*.

Yet, what Riesman conceded then is

still true: only a fraction of the working population is, in fact, employed by big business. (Today, only 10 percent of working Americans are on the payrolls of private firms with more than 1000 employees.) But he had a point. A personal reputation for old-fashioned rectitude, thrift and honesty counted for more in a close-knit town of small merchants and farmers than it did in large, impersonal organizations. But hard work and intelligence still mattered a great deal, then as later. As certain small-town virtues faded in importance, for better or worse, the values of "meritocracy" took their place.

There was a socially benevolent side to the postwar growth of corporate capitalism, but it was not widely appreciated at the time. The rise of publicly owned corporations, under way since the turn of the century, spelled the demise of "family capitalism," and all that went with it. When companies are owned by a vast, amorphous group of shareholders, perpetuation of wealth and power is difficult. By the 1950s, large family-controlled enterprises, such as the Ford Motor Company, were anomalies. Much more common were publicly owned corporations, such as General Motors, run for many years by Alfred P. Sloan Jr. Sloan and other professional managers could pass on whatever wealth (usually modest) they accumulated to their sons and daughters, and they could provide them with superior educational opportunities, but they could not confer automatic "position" and power, as Henry Ford did. Under the pressure of competition, big business had created room at the top.

Increasing Social Mobility

Not that "rags to riches" sagas became more common. In 1959, reviewing various studies of the "business elite" stretching back to colonial times, sociologists Seymour Martin Lipset and Reinhard Bendix found that only 10 to 20 percent of executives have ever come from the most humble socioeconomic origins. Instead, the changing structure of business allowed those Americans whose parents already had made it into the middle class to stand on the shoulders of their fathers and climb a bit higher.

Overall, sociologists have found, the 20th century has seen a slight but measurable rise in social mobility in America. It has been steady, unaffected even by the Great Depression—although the careers of young people during the 1930s were set back—or by the great burst of prosperity after World War II.

No single factor seems to explain the increase, though the growth of service industries is one likely contributor. The service sector created thousands of relatively high-paying jobs for educated workers—nurses, bankers, government bureaucrats, engineers. And, partly because secondary-school enrollments swelled during the Depression and later, Americans became steadily more educated.

Progress was uneven. During the 1950s and into the '60s, lingering social discrimination kept the rising generation of college-educated descendants of recent white immigrants out of many places at the very apex of society, especially in the older precincts of the Northeast.

As late as 1964, sociologist E. Digby Baltzell of the University of Pennsylvania could still write about *The Protestant Establishment*. If well-to-do White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs) did not throw open the doors of their prestigious schools and other institutions to more non-WASP men of achievement, he warned, the nation would lose its last chance to ensure the survival of a cohesive upper class of "real distinction and wide authority." Baltzell, no egalitarian, argued that a permeable but well-defined upper class was essential to the proper governance of a democracy.

As Baltzell conceded, the 1960 presidential-election victory of John F. Kennedy, a Catholic, Harvard alumnus and grandson of an Irish immigrant, suggested that the half of Baltzell's argument about social mobility might already have been won. The other half—preserving a cohesive national upper class—was already lost; America was now just too big and diverse.

Despite its symbolism, Kennedy's election represented, in large measure, a continuation of 1950s-style politics. "Soak the rich" rhetoric was out. Indeed, in 1962, when Kennedy proposed an income-tax cut to stimulate the economy, he sounded for all the world like the conservative Republican President Calvin Coolidge. The existing tax structure, he said, "reduces the financial incentives for personal effort, investment and risk-taking."

Voters remain remarkably resistant to the sales pitch. At a time when more than half of all Americans of college age enter college, voters are less likely prospects to be indoctrinated, manipulated or subliminally influenced in their choice of Presidents. They know they are seeing a commercial, and they adjust accordingly.

—Stephen Hess
Political Scholar and Former Presidential Adviser

By the time Lyndon B. Johnson declared "War on Poverty" in 1964, the Democrats' efforts had been transformed into a broad assault on economic, political and racial inequality. A new kind of class politics had been born—not "soak the rich" but lift up the poor and the minorities. "The central problem," LBJ declared, "is to protect and restore man's satisfaction in belonging to a community where he can find security and significance." Meanwhile, many of the remaining legal props of racial discrimination were swept away by the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

The egalitarian spirit of the age may have peaked in 1969, when Richard Nixon, a conservative Re-

publican, backed a plan that greatly expanded the scope of LBJ's 1965 "affirmative action" directive by requiring federal contractors to establish hiring quotas for blacks. In the space of five years, the federal government had shifted decisively from seeking equality of *opportunity* for racial minorities to promoting equality of *results*.

However, there were limits to how far the American people were willing to go in the direction of egalitarianism and the new class politics. In 1972, Democratic presidential candidate George McGovern proposed an astonishing new tax on inheritances: no individual would be allowed to inherit more than $500,000. To the surprise of McGovern's aides, the inheritance-tax proposal was unpopular among working-class voters. As McGovern's spokesman mournfully acknowledged, "it wipes out dreams."

The proposal also helped to wipe out McGovern, although many other factors contributed to Nixon's landslide reelection. As historian Theodore H. White observed of blue-collar workers who voted for Nixon, they "had fought their way up to the status, the comfort, the neighborhoods in which they now dwelt—and wanted to preserve their neighborhoods and way of life against the tide of change."

Cutting Taxes

As the 1970s progressed, severe economic recessions and chronic inflation led many more Americans to worry about advancing or preserving their standard of living. The national mood changed. Law, business and medical schools expanded.

If the Great Depression of the 1930s had stirred resentment of the wealthy, the "stagflation" of the '70s spurred many Americans to try harder to become rich (or, at least, well-to-do). The difficulties of the 1970s and early '80s, with their uneven impact, bred a popular desire to "level up," especially among younger couples, often putting wife as well as husband to work outside the home.

One explanation of the change lies in the U.S. tax code, which was to undergo two drastic and unprecedented overhauls during the 1980s. "Bracket creep," caused by affluence and the high inflation of the 1970s, meant that many more ordinary working people began to pay higher income taxes, and thus a larger share of the bill for the nation's modest program of income redistribution.

As a result, much of the electorate was receptive in 1980 when Ronald Reagan proposed a massive 30 percent cut in federal income-tax rates. Now it was big government, not big business and Wall Street, that was to blame for the citizen's woes. "If there's one thing we've seen enough," Reagan declared, "it's this idea that for one American to gain, another American has to suffer. If we put incentives back into society, everyone will gain."

In short order, Congress adopted President Reagan's Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981, slashing the top income-tax rate to 50 percent. In 1985, Reagan proposed a sweeping new tax plan. Adopted by Congress the next year, it further cut rates, but closed many loopholes available to businesses and the well-to-do.

In part because of these tax cuts, the entrepreneurial spirit flourished. In 1985, Americans launched some 669,000 business enterprises, more than twice as many as they had in 1970. Most of the new ventures were small businesses. The old dream of independence, of being one's own boss, had not died.

Through all of this, the less fortunate did not fade from public view, as they had during the 1950s. Indeed, political and scholarly discussion of the plight of the poor has revived during the past half decade.

In a recent study of *The Truly Disadvantaged* (1987), for example, sociologist William Julius Wilson notes that, overall, blacks have made significant economic progress since 1960. While only 10.4 percent of black families earned more than $25,000 in 1960, nearly a quarter of black families did so by 1982.

There is surprisingly high mobility among the poor of all races. "Only a little over one-half of the individuals living in poverty in one year are poor in the next," concludes economist Greg J. Duncan, of the University of Michigan. This applies to Appalachian whites, to Hispanics in south Texas, to newly arrived Vietnamese. Even among the daughters of poor, black, single mothers, two-thirds manage to escape poverty when they leave home. As political scientist Edward Banfield of Harvard University observed in 1970, a willingness to delay gratification and an orientation toward the future are essential to getting ahead.

The three most important known ingredients of "success" in present-day America are education, one's father's occupation (and the advantages it may bring) and one's first job. A positive outlook (shown in work effort and strong career ambitions), high intelligence and coming from a small, intact family also help, but they seem less significant than schooling. Education level matters most.

However, sociologists have been able so far to account for only about half of the elements of any given individual's career success, or lack of it. There remains a mysterious "X" factor; in the great tradition of the Horatio Alger "rags to riches" stories, good luck and the ability to find one's proper niche, along with other intangibles, seem to matter a great deal.

That is as it should be, for a society in which all individual prospects could be more or less calculated in advance would be extraordinarily dreary, and, almost inevitably, prone to harsh class conflict and other ills. In the imaginary hotel of the social classes that Joseph Schumpeter described back in 1926, it is never certain who will occupy the luxury suites, and who will inhabit the dingy lower floors—or for how long. That uncertainty, along with rising material well-being for all, has helped to keep the big American hotel a relatively peaceful establishment. ♦

Religion and American Values

A prominent pollster investigates historical and present-day attitudes toward religion, secularism and politics.

By Everett Carll Ladd

More than 70 percent of Americans, according to a poll mentioned in the following article, would not vote for a presidential candidate who did not believe in God, even though they liked the candidate personally and shared his political views. Many foreign observers might be puzzled by this attitude, just as they are often puzzled about the religiosity of Americans. There is a 20th-century assumption—especially strong in Europe—that "religion" and "modernity" are somehow incompatible. In this article, however, Everett Carll Ladd argues against this assumption and traces the historical development in the United States of both a secular and a religious tradition. He points out that while Americans have by and large reconciled these traditions, there is conflict "on the margin of this broad policy area." He cites one area of conflict that will concern voters in the 1988 election—the abortion issue—and commentaries from other experts—political scientist A. James Reichley on page 42 and sociologist Peter L. Berger on page 46—reveal additional ways in which religious values are major factors in the American political scene.

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What do we know, comparatively, about the religious beliefs and practice of Americans? We seek to compare the United States against the experience of other countries, especially other advanced industrial democracies, and to locate present American religious belief and practice against those of times past. A quarter-century ago, there was something approaching consensus on the emergence of a secular America in which religion was in permanent weakness or decline. Today, few feel sure that this is so, and some feel quite the opposite. We read that the United States is in the midst of a Great Awakening that recalls earlier periods of religious enthusiasm.

A great many observers have noted that, religiously, the United States does not behave as it should, given its economic, technological, scientific, postindustrial development. Political scientist Walter Dean Burnham observed in 1981 that "the proposition suggests itself that the higher the level of development in a given society the smaller will be the fraction of its population for whom religious beliefs are of great importance." Testing this proposition, Burnham compared a large number of countries according to "development variables" and the extent to which their citizens profess that their religious beliefs are important, or unimportant, in their lives. "Two things are immediately visible on inspection. First, the overall relationship is not only as posited, it is nearly linear and extremely strong." That is, the more "developed" the country, the lower the importance citizens attach to religion. "Second, the United States in particular does not fit the main sequence at all." There is a very nice regression line, along which most countries are clustered—and then there is the United States way off in a corner, highly developed and very religious.

This basic condition has been noted and effectively described by a number of writers. We have, in particular, sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset's splendid summary in his chapter, "Religion and American Values," in *The First New Nation* (1963). Lipset notes how foreign observers, reaching back to the early 19th century, have been struck by the strength of religious beliefs and practice in the United States. Lipset concludes that "the one empirical generalization which does seem justified about American religion is that from the early 19th century down to the present, the United States has been among the most religious countries in the Christian world."

By just about every measure that survey researchers have conceived and employed, the United States appears markedly more religious than

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Evangelicals and Catholics

By A. James Reichley

Religion has always played an important part in American politics. The founders of the Republic drew on religious values and rhetoric in forming the new nation. Churches were active on both sides in the controversy over slavery and the Civil War that it produced. Religious groups were significant participants in campaigns for such diverse causes as prohibition of the sale of liquor, defense of the gold standard in the 1890s, enactment of women's suffrage, reform of the national economy under the New Deal, the passage of civil-rights legislation in the 1960s. Perhaps most important, religion was the source of the so-called Protestant ethic, which has helped shape both the goals and the standards of American political life.

During the 1980s, some religious groups have become exceptionally visible and active in national politics. Certainly shifts in the electoral behavior of such major groups as Roman Catholics and white evangelical Protestants hold the capacity for radically altering the national political balance.

Comprising about 20 percent of the national electorate, white evangelical Protestants traditionally tended to be politically passive. To the extent that they were active, in the South they overwhelmingly supported the regionally dominant Democratic party. Even in the North, they were more likely than other white Protestants to be Democrats, probably because they were drawn disproportionately from lower-income groups. In the 1980s, all of this has changed. White evangelical Protestants have risen to relatively high rates of registration and voting and have given their support overwhelmingly to conservative Republicans, not only for President but in 1984 in congressional races as well.

The evangelicals show some signs of becoming a solid block of reliable electoral support for the Republicans, of the kind that the Democrats for many years received from Catholics and Jews, and still receive from blacks. Almost tribal identification of this kind by a group with a party is of particular political value since it is relatively immune to ups and downs in the economy. There are several reasons, however, for questioning whether the political effectiveness achieved by the evangelicals in 1984 will turn out to be enduring.

The orientation of the evangelical churches has always worked against their mobilization as a unified political force. Not only is evangelicalism inherently individualistic, but also it is organized around highly competitive charismatic preachers who tend naturally to clash. In 1980 and 1984, evangelical leaders, despite some internal bickering, were remarkably successful in suppressing their normal fractiousness to maintain political unity.

The other group that seems to be undergoing profound political change in the middle years of the 1980s is the Roman Catholic church, the nation's largest single denomination. Catholicism has been associated with the Democratic party since the founding years of the Republic. Catholics voted by large majorities for Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson, and remained overwhelmingly loyal to the Democratic party during the long years of Republican hegemony from the Civil War to the 1930s' Depression. The first Catholic major-party candidate for President, Al Smith, and the first Catholic President, John Kennedy, were both Democrats. Before 1972, no Republican ever won a majority of the Catholic vote for President. Yet in 1984, 55 percent of Catholic voters chose Ronald Reagan over Walter Mondale, a classic New Deal Democrat.

What appears to have happened is not that Catholics have swung massively to the Republicans, in the manner of white evangelicals, but that most of them no longer see much identification between being a Catholic and being a Democrat. Polls show that the abortion issue is decisive with about one-tenth of all Catholic voters. These voters are moving as a block toward the Republicans, whose position on the issue is much closer to the church's view than that of the Democrats.

It is part of the essence of pluralist democracy that each church or religious group must decide for itself how far it should go in promoting political causes. ♦

From *Political Science Quarterly*. A. James Reichley, The Brookings Institution.

its peers in the family of nations, the other industrial democracies. This relationship was established a long time ago. In addition, the extent of the United States' religious differentiation from other industrial countries may have increased in recent years. Why is the United States so durably different?

Lipset has emphasized "the effect of the separation of church and state, which resulted in American churches being voluntary organizations in which congregational self-government was the predominant form of church government." Religious denominations have drawn on the extraordinary power of American liberal individualism.

In *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville had remarked on the general strength of voluntary associations in the United States. Americans were a nation of joiners. He explained this propensity in terms of individualism. "The citizen of the United States," Tocqueville wrote, "is taught from infancy to rely upon his own exertions in order to resist the evils and the difficulties of life; he looks upon the social authority with an eye of mistrust and anxiety, and he claims its assistance only when he is unable to do without it." Joining with other like-minded persons to meet common needs and attack common problems expresses a sense of individual responsibility and self-confidence.

Many Competing Churches

A variant of this explanation notes the importance of competition and free markets. With the establishment of a state church proscribed by the First Amendment to the Constitution, and government for the most part eschewing special assistance to any one of the many competing denominations, a religious equivalent of an economic free market resulted—only more so, because the marketplace in religion has been subject to regulatory control and assistance much less than the economic marketplace. The result has been what we know from market competition generally: the achievement of "more," in this case a more dynamic, participating denominational life. When older, established churches have lost touch with important segments of their "markets," the public has found new "firms" more than ready to fill the void. We have seen this worked out in Protestant denominational experience of the last quarter-century, as conservative and fundamentalist churches have grown, in some cases dramatically, and the mainline churches have declined.

Outside the United States, the historic association of churches with nondemocratic forces, especially the aristocracy, meant that proponents of a newer, freer, more egalitarian and democratic order often had good reason to consider religious institutions—and by an understandable if ultimately invalid extrapolation, religious belief—to be their enemies. In contrast, the United States has historically seen religious experience contributing to the strength and vitality of democracy.

Tocqueville's insights on one key chapter of this important story are worth reciting again. He argued that the religious beliefs and institutions the Pilgrims had brought with them to New England in the 17th century contributed much to the vigorous democratic practice that took root long before independence was achieved from the British Crown. The Pilgrims thought that every individual should have a knowledge of Scripture, which meant that everyone should be able to read—so they pioneered in establishing a compulsory system of public education. This helped make citizens more aware and better able to involve themselves in community life. Believing that every individual was equal in the eyes of God, the Pilgrims proposed rules, compacts and institutions that gave each person a voice in affairs such as government.

Such beliefs were "not merely a religious doctrine, but corresponded in many points with the most absolute democratic and republican theories," Tocqueville wrote. In New England "a democracy, more perfect than antiquity had dared to dream of, started in full size and panoply from the midst of an ancient feudal society," according to Tocqueville. He saw that "the Americans have succeeded in incorporating to some extent one with the other and combining admirably" two distinct elements. "I allude to the *spirit of religion* and the *spirit of liberty*. The settlers of New England were at the same time ardent sectarians and daring innovators."

The Roots of the American Creed

Religious belief has both contributed to and accommodated the dominant American ideology. From the ratification of the Constitution two centuries ago, through our own time, a great orienting ideology has dominated American thought. Its roots are in classical liberalism, but, since it has never received a statement in classical liberal thought outside the United States comparable to what it has received here, we are justified in calling it simply "the American ideology." Observers of American politics have often commented on the ideology's striking persistence over two centuries in which so much otherwise has changed. A socially dynamic America has thus in a sense been a conservative nation—one that throughout its history has sought to maintain and extend established values rather than pursue new ones. In the same way, observers of American religiousness have commented on religion's persisting vitality here, even in the face of developments thought to be disruptive of religious belief.

The source of the continuity is much the same in both cases. A set of values, present in the colonial experience, led to the establishment of a consistent set of social and political institutions. Inextricably linked, these institutions and values have been seen as successful by every subsequent generation of Americans—although not by every group equally. Thus reinforced, they have persisted. "America is the only nation in the world that is founded on a Creed," British writer Gilbert K. Chesterton observed in *What I Saw in America*. Religious beliefs are interwoven in that creed and reflect its central values, including the commitment to individualism, equality and freedom. The unique religiousness of Americans,

compared to citizens of other industrial democracies, is to some degree part and parcel of the unique commitment Americans have made over two change-filled centuries to a defining, domineering ideology.

Lipset argued in *The First New Nation* against any interpretation of American religious experience that posits that the country is becoming more or less religious over time. "Rather, one concludes...that, although there have been ebbs and flows in enthusiasm, basic long-term changes in formal religious affiliation and practice have not occurred." Survey data collected over the last 20 years add further support to this conclusion. Although ebbs and flows can be seen, the underlying continuity is most impressive. Tabulated data show stability in rates of church attendance, in public confidence in religious institutions and in the sense of religion's importance. They do indicate that since the early 1960s, large numbers of Americans have seen religion losing influence in national life, but this probably reflects more the anxiety people typically feel about the status of a valued institution or belief, than any objective fact of religion's decline.

Interpreting the Opinion Polls

Americans profess today a strikingly high commitment to religion. Over 70 percent of a 1983 national sample went so far as to state that they would not vote for a candidate for President who did not believe in God, "even if you really liked him and you shared his political views." About 58 percent of those interviewed in 1983 and 1984 polls said that they typically prayed at least once a day. The surveys found huge majorities professing traditional views of God and the Bible.

What about "real" belief? Polls cannot "look into people's hearts," learn everything about what they really think, and measure the "true depth and conviction" of their religious experience. Some observers may wish to claim that religious beliefs were actually more vital at some times in the past than they are now, even if the crude "objective" data available to us do not support this.

My suspicion is that religious beliefs and practice have *always* left a good bit to be desired by such standards as depth and sincerity. I also suspect that our crude poll data are reasonably reliable. By all conventional measures, Americans are a pretty religious people when compared to their counterparts in other industrial countries, and they have been a religious people throughout their history. One can always wish for more information, and lament the incompleteness or insincerity of what we have. But continuity is the key—continuity in the face of all sorts of moanings and groanings about religion's decline, about secularism, about the good old days of fervent belief.

There are some who would concur in the general conclusions reached thus far—and then insist that the generalization papers over too much underlying diversity. As a whole the American people are religious, but this whole is reached by some groups being extremely religious, in traditional American and even premodern terms, while other groups have pretty much given up on religion. Averaging it all out, one gets a fairly religious whole, but such averaging is a specious exercise.

There are a number of different aspects of this argument. One has posited sharp generational departures, with young people having a strikingly different world view from their elders. Another interpretation emphasizes the importance of college education as a dividing line: the college-educated segments of the public, especially the young, are vastly more secular than persons with only secondary-school educations. Yet a third argument sees religious people as disproportionately underclass, ethnic and marginal, while cosmopolitan America goes riding off into a secular sunset.

The data deny these arguments. From my perch, where I spend a lot of time comparing groups in their social and political commitments, I am struck by how modest the group divisions often are in the core area of religion. To the extent that these data capture underlying dimensions of religious practice and values, and I think they do fairly well, they show that American religiousness cuts strikingly across group lines. Many members of the groups we are comparing would probably be surprised by the lack of difference on many fundamental religious matters—because outside in the world of social values they are often much more significantly opposed one to another.

In the 27 years since John F. Kennedy's election, a single generation, born between 1908 and 1924, has governed. Its political approach was molded by its formative experiences—the Great Depression and Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, World War II, and America's emergence as the protector of the free world. While one generation has led the nation since the Kennedy era, a different generation has come to ascendancy in the American electorate. This generation has become impatient for its time in the sun.

—Peter D. Hart and Geoffrey Garin
Political Pollsters

My argument is that America is today what it has always been—both a highly religious and an intensely secular society. Nothing much seems to be happening on either of these fronts; the latter because we have gone about as far as we can go, the former because we see no reason to back away from the point we long ago arrived at. Religious-history scholar Martin Marty wrote in 1982 of the kaleidoscopic shifts in religious beliefs and institutional experience in the United States over the last several decades as occurring "within the borders of an 'all-pervasive religiousness' and a concurrent and 'persistent secularity.'" He refers to the "religio-secular" character of America's most fun-

damental commitments. "The double paradigm will no doubt diminish the audaciousness of certain prophecies and projections: bold predictions of the purely secular city or a thoroughly sacral culture are obviously highly dramatic." I would put the matter a little differently. America's dual status—as religious and secular—is sometimes described as confusing and contradictory. In fact, it is not contradictory, and it should not be confusing.

To understand secularization, a whole bundle of developments stretching from the 15th through the 18th centuries need to be noted. Of prime importance are three great, interrelated sets of revolutionary change: the commercial, and later the industrial revolution, which dramatically expanded the wealth of nations; the Enlightenment and subsequently the scientific revolution, which greatly altered perceptions of man and the universe; and the egalitarian revolution, which brought down class-dominated societies and established more open and participatory, and sometimes even democratic, systems in their stead. This large, complex process formulated the fundamental meaning of secularization.

In the first instance, with the transition from agricultural to industrial societies in the West, there was a major expansion of resources. In societies of scarcity, if any culture is to flourish, it is only by arbitrarily granting privilege to a few. Aristocracy offers a morally tenable standard for parceling out values only in scarcity-bound societies. Let the pie dramatically expand—and that is what the economic-technological developments began to achieve in the 17th and 18th centuries—and groups of people outside the hereditary privileged class will step forward to claim their share, will come to feel that life owes them something other than perpetual wretchedness. With the prospect of continuing growth in economic output, it became possible, not a cruel hoax, to say as Jefferson did in the Declaration of Independence that all people have a right to "the pursuit of happiness."

This is one key part of the idea of secularization—that people have a right to expect happiness in this world. It became possible to view people in a wholly new light, as sovereign beings with rights, not merely duties. "Individualism," wrote Tocqueville in *Democracy in America*, "is a novel expression, to which a novel idea has given birth." Individualism is a luxury of societies that see the possibility of escaping the absolute domination of scarcity.

Secularism and John Locke

There was a continuing interaction between physical and psychological processes, between events and ideas. The economic stirrings of industrialization created new expectations. Masses of people came to believe that they could change the way they lived; and the idea of progress, as we know it now, took form. Society became more and more secularized—more and more of this world—as energies were channeled into altering the here and now.

In the West during the 17th and 18th centuries, new ways of viewing man's psychological apparatus were formulated which provided the intellectual underpinnings of individualism. The brain came to be seen in the best scientific thought as a simple Newtonian machine. Ideas come from the senses. The job of the brain is organizing the sensations brought to it. This brain, this simple machine, is approximately the same for all people: the outputs are different (that is, people are different) only because the inputs vary. The brain, John Locke wrote, in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, is at birth an "empty cabinet," a "white paper," "void of all characters, without any ideas." What man becomes depends upon what his environment causes to be placed or written upon it. What an extraordinarily secularizing idea. The sensationalist epistemology of Locke and others of his contemporaries was certainly heady stuff. People are approximately equal in natural capabilities; they differ in performance only because the environments of some are less good. How, then, is the permanent privilege of the aristocracy to be justified? Aristocrats are simply people blessed with better environments. Just as the economic expansion of the industrial revolution created the material output to offer promise to common men that life had something for them beyond gross deprivation, the intellectual basis for a thoroughly secular individualism was developed from a view of human psychology that attributed performance to environment.

As the scientific revolution advanced, naturalistic explanations of the way the world works were gradually extended, finding acceptance in the general public. For example, people get sick because nasty little microbes afflict their bodies, not because of mysterious and fundamentally unknowable forces.

The United States was born at the juncture of these several sets of revolutionary change, and American values and outlook have from the outset been dominated by them. The United States has never been divided between secularized and premodern segments. Virtually everyone has been comfortable with naturalistic explanations of a lot of daily life, committed to the idea of progress, insistent in expecting and claiming earthly happiness. Under a variety of provocations, scattered individuals and groups have rejected this basic secularism—but not many. At times there have been what sociologist Nathan Glazer calls "defensive offensives" by social strata in decline, against ascendant strata, which are construed as a resistance to secularism. The flap over teaching Darwinism, extending through the much-ballyhooed and exaggerated events in the 1925 Scopes Monkey Trial in Tennessee, is a case in point. But there has simply never been in the United States any coherent, wholehearted assault on the essential naturalism that underlies modern science. Most Americans have remained comfortable with a secular view of the world.

If naturalism could explain everything, if science and technology could control everything, if the capacities of an industrial economy could solve all problems—there would be no place for religion, for belief in God, for what are sometimes referred to as the sa-

Church and State: New Balances

By Peter L. Berger

Sidney Mead, the eminent American church historian, has described the United States as "a nation with the soul of a church." The phrase is apt and serves well to illuminate various aspects of the American national character, such as its deep-rooted sense of historic mission and its inveterate moralism.

The U.S. Constitution might well have set up a wall of separation between church and state, but it most certainly did not set up a wall between religion and politics.

In recent decades America has seen three religio-political eruptions: the civil-rights movement, the antiwar movement with its various left-leaning offshoots, and most recently, the powerful phenomenon that religion scholar Richard John Neuhaus has called the "bourgeois insurgency," generating miscellaneous offshoots but with the antiabortion movement at its core.

The most dramatic expression of American religious turbulence today has been the upsurge of evangelicalism in its various forms. At least since the mid-1970s, traditional religious and moral beliefs, which had been assumed to survive in the hinterlands of society, suddenly erupted into the center of public life. Even those safely located within the cultural enclaves of "secular humanism" have been forced to take notice of this veritable explosion of religious fervor, first in bewilderment, then (especially as elements of the evangelical world became mobilized in the service of right-of-center political causes) with growing alarm.

With the exception of the so-called mainline Protestant denominations, this religious revival has manifested itself elsewhere as well. Spurred on by Rome, especially under the present papacy, powerful neo-traditionalist impulses have made themselves felt in the Catholic community. There has occurred an increasingly robust religious revival within all denominations of American Judaism. Least noticed but of great potential importance have been the increasing vitality and "Americanization" of Eastern Orthodox Christianity, now no longer an ethnic enclave. There has been the spectacular increase of the Mormons. Whatever else most Americans are, they are not "secular humanists."

To turn to the church-state issues, the two most important positions are held by those who advocate a strict separation and by those who would somehow accommodate the religious character of the American people. Both positions (there are, of course, many gradations in each) face serious difficulties.

The doctrine of strict separation flies in the face of a social reality that remains persistently, stubbornly religious. The unending turmoil engendered by the Supreme Court decision prohibiting prayer in the public schools is the best example of this collision: whatever may have been the careful legal reasoning behind the decision, the fact remains that millions of Americans have perceived it as a solemn declaration that, their most dearly held beliefs and values having been disavowed by the highest legal authority of the Republic, their country has become officially godless. The political difficulties this has led to are evident.

But there is a deeper difficulty. Every society requires legitimation which must be credible in terms of beliefs and values that people actually hold. When a people is as religious as the American people, it is going to be very difficult to purge the official legitimations of society of all religious symbols and still have them remain credible. The doctrine of strict separation (not just between the state and specific denominations, but between the state and religion as such) has thus contributed to a crisis of legitimation.

The accommodationist position, however, faces serious difficulties as well. These are all grounded in the equally stubborn reality of American pluralism. Just which religious symbols are to be accommodated in the "public square"? The answer to this question has usually been rendered in terms of the Judeo-Christian tradition. One may leave aside for the moment how this answer will sit with Buddhists and with agnostics. But there is the more intractable fact that those who do identify with that great tradition, in its various denominational forms, are themselves deeply divided as to its moral meaning.

American society, however, has long experience with settling seemingly irreconcilable positions. It is not unreasonable to expect that new formulas can be found to institutionalize new balances, new compromises. ♦

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cred and the transcendent. But none of the above apply. This conclusion appears not from the musings of frustrated religionists, but from the cold, clear-headed reasoning of science. This is why the most secular societies can easily be, at the same time, among the most religious. The early-20th-century populist William Jennings Bryan, in *In His Image*, remarked that "it is better to trust in the Rock of Ages than to know the age of rock; it is better for one to know that he is close to the Heavenly Father, than to know how far the stars in the heavens are apart." But his whole idea is silly. Very few Americans now, 50 years ago, 100 years ago, 200 years ago, really believed there was any need to choose between trusting God and studying a little geology.

Religious commitments and scientific, naturalistic, secular views of the world exist side by side with little strain in most people in the United States—because they understand the latter's inescapable limits. This does not stop some from taking enormous leaps and suggesting that scientific reasoning has brought them close to understanding all of the fundamental developments of the universe—down to Big Bang creationist mythology. All this is on the fringe. Very few Americans resent carrying naturalistic reasoning as far as it can go—and then granting that they are left with a large portion of life, including many of its most important dimensions, with which to deal.

Underlying America's religio-secular paradigm is a striking national consensus. As a country that has rested comfortably for two centuries with the secularism which defines modernity, the United States is free from the profound cultural discontinuities that afflict countries whose populations are spread across different rungs of a developmental ladder. Most groups in the U.S. population have long since reconciled, with reasonable ease, secular perspectives and religious impulses—although the styles of expression of these reconciliations vary enormously.

All the central elements for an essential harmony are in place. The separation of church and state, despite some rhetoric to the contrary, is widely accepted, in essentially the same terms. Conflict occurs only on the margin of this broad policy area. The propriety of and need for prayer is widely recognized, and a very large proportion of the public favors a modest rollback of the 1962 Supreme Court decision prohibiting prayer in public schools, while providing a greater measure of local option, with safeguards for minority sensibilities.

One expression of this larger religious consensus is the diminution of political divisions among religious groups—again, despite some efforts to give these divisions saliency. For all of the talk of religious leaps over the wall between church and state in the 1984 presidential campaign, most Americans were little exercised. America has a history of religious groups voting in sharp opposition one to another, reflecting important social tensions organized around religious group lines. In 1984 the differences among religious groups in presidential preference were modest indeed, probably the least substantial in American history.

The Abortion Issue

The American public remains divided, sometimes sharply so, over a number of political issues that involve contrasting values and perspectives. Abortion is a good case in point. Fifteen years after the Supreme Court ruled that state laws banning abortion are unconstitutional, with about 15 million abortions performed nationally during that time, it is hardly surprising that passions are aroused. Both sides to the conflict see morality on their side. Both express their moral convictions around fundamental individual rights—although here as in other instances the antagonists are separated by a wide gulf on the question of which individuals and which rights need greater recognition. Various teachings, including those derived from churches and colleges, along with class-related differences in expectations, account for the contrasting perspectives on what reverence for the individual requires.

A very large segment of the general public finds itself cross-pressured and torn by the issue of abortion. When the issue is framed in terms of the individual woman being given a choice—"do you agree or disagree that the decision to have an abortion should be left to the woman and her physician"—the overwhelming majority comes down on the prochoice side. But only a fifth or so of the public believes that abortion should be legal under all circumstances, and three-fifths want greater restrictions than presently apply. Abortion is a major political issue, surrounded by important ethical concerns, on which different groups in the population can "quote scripture" from America's individualistic ideology.

Important though an issue such as abortion is, it has little to do with the status of religion in society or with secularization. There are equally good secular cases for and against abortion. Religious people disagree on what policy should be. Many religious leaders have opinions, as they should, but the way America resolves this issue is at heart a matter of how it will resolve the powerful ethical ambiguities that continually arise from its two-centuries-old commitment to a liberating yet befuddling individualism.

Sociologist Peter Berger, who seems at times to use *secularization* to mean antagonism "to the dimension of transcendence in the human condition," wonders, in *Facing Up to Modernity*, "whether modernization *without* secularization is possible in different cultural contexts." But we know the answer. The cultural context—resulting from contrasting historical experiences—is very different in other Western nations such as Sweden than in the United States. These two very modern countries differ enormously in the strength of their religious institutions and beliefs. Modernity does not establish some inescapable progression of religious decline: surely the experience of the United States establishes this. ♦

AN ANTHROPOLOGIST STUDIES THE MEDICAL TRIBE

By Lewis Thomas

Prompted by an anthropologist's venture into medical school, a distinguished physician and writer reflects on the strengths and shortcomings of modern medicine.

Over the last 50 years medical researchers have made phenomenal progress in unmasking the mechanisms of disease and wrought a quiet revolution in how physicians practice medicine. The brilliance of these achievements, however, sometimes blinds us to the limits of modern medicine and tempts us to ignore the lessons of earlier eras.

In 1980, Melvin Konner, then a professor of anthropology at Harvard University and an accomplished field anthropologist, gave up his teaching position to enroll full-time at Harvard Medical School. The book he wrote on his experiences is both a personal account of contemporary medical education and a trained observer's study of the medical tribe. In this essay, inspired by Konner's book and by his own memories of medical school, Lewis Thomas notes that medicine has become a highly sophisticated, time-consuming science. According to Thomas, this development seems to endanger the personal relationship between physician and patient—and, in the teaching hospital, between professor and student. He also argues that there are many diseases doctors do not yet understand. Until research is able to solve these puzzles, medical education should provide students with a greater sense of our "medical ignorance."

Lewis Thomas is a physician, cancer researcher and former professor of medicine. He has served as president and chancellor of the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York City, one of the most prominent medical-research facilities in the United States, and is now president emeritus of Sloan-Kettering. In addition, he has written several acclaimed books of essays, including The Youngest Science *and* The Lives of a Cell, *which won a National Book Award in 1975.*

Doctors, dressed up in one professional costume or another, have been in busy practice since the earliest records of every culture on Earth. It is hard to think of a more dependable or enduring occupation, harder still to imagine any future events leading to its extinction. Other trades—goldsmithing, embalming, cathedral architecture, hexing, even philosophy—have had their ups and downs and times of vanishing, but doctoring has been with us since we stumbled into language and society, and will likely last forever, or for as long as we become ill and die, which is to say forever.

What is it that we expected from our shamans, millennia ago, and still require from the contemporary masters of the profession? To *do* something, that's what.

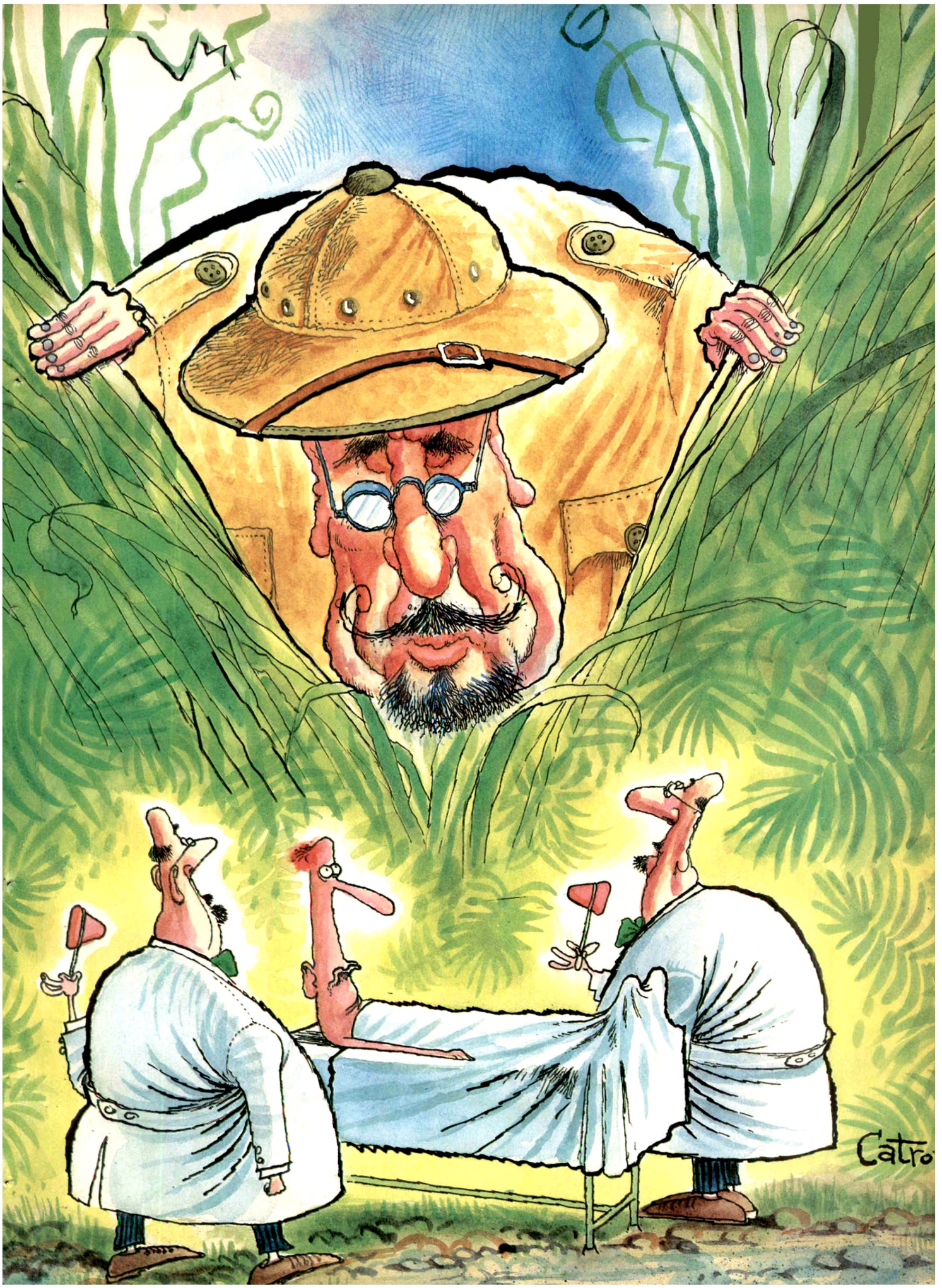
The earliest sensation at the onset of illness, often preceding the recognition of identifiable symptoms, is apprehension. Something has gone wrong, and a glimpse of mortality shifts somewhere deep in the mind. It is the most ancient of our fears. Something must be done, and quickly. Come, please, and help, or go, please, and find help. Hence, the profession of medicine.

You might expect that such a calling, with origins in deepest antiquity, would by this time have at hand an immense store of traditional dogma, volumes and volumes of it, filled with piece after piece of old wisdom, tested through the ages. It is not so. Books do exist, of course, but all of them are shiny new, and nearly all the usable knowledge came in a few months ago. Medical information does not, it seems, build on itself; it simply replaces structures already set in place, like the New York skyline. Medical knowledge and technical savvy are biodegradable. The sort of medicine that was practiced in Boston or New York or Atlanta 50 years ago would be as strange to a medical student or intern today as the ceremonial dance of a !Kung San tribe would seem to a rock-festival audience in New Jersey.

Into this jumpy, always revising profession there strolled, several

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Illustration by David J. Catrow


Catro

years ago, an inquisitive anthropologist, not totally an innocent, fresh from two years of living with a !Kung San tribe in the Kalahari Desert, with another possible book on his mind. Melvin Konner, Ph.D., a professor at Harvard University, had hankered in boyhood to be a physician but had given up the idea in his undergraduate Harvard years and gone on to graduate school instead. After establishing himself as an academic expert in comparative behavior, his curiosity about medicine returned in force, and he arranged for admission to Harvard Medical School at the age of 35. He does not entirely explain the move; in part, maybe large part, he did so out of professional anthropological interest: what was the tribe of medical doctors really like when viewed closely from inside? The thought of becoming a physician, looking after sick people, was near the top of his mind, but not, as with his classmates, the only thought.

The book he wrote on his experience, *Becoming a Doctor: A Journey of Initiation in Medical School*, deals almost exclusively with the third year of school, the time when students are done with their didactic courses in basic biomedical science and are now in white coats, out on the wards of the teaching hospital, learning the laying on of hands and discovering that the hands are to be laid on equipment more often than on patients.

Early on in this year, Konner began to encounter the aphorisms on which the practice of medicine has long been based. Unlike aphorisms in general, these nuggets of perceived wisdom are made up anew by each generation, but a few of them have old histories. The best of these, which Konner recognizes for its immense importance, is a short sequence of prescriptions given to him by one of his teachers:

> If it's working, keep doing it.
> If it's not working, stop doing it.
> If you don't know what to do,
> don't do anything.

The third of these, Konner says he later realized, is "the most difficult one by far, the one least adhered to in common medical practice, and beyond a doubt the most important."

Of course. Indeed, it is the ambiguity arising from this plain piece of sense that is principally responsible, in my view, for most of the problems that face contemporary medicine, including the bad press, the mutual mistrust and disillusionment among doctors and their patients, the escalating costs of health care and insurance, including malpractice insurance—in short, the state of crisis in which the profession finds itself today.

I take it further. The dilemma of modern medicine, and the underlying central flaw in medical education and, most of all, in the training of interns, is the irresistible drive to do something, anything. It is expected by patients and too often agreed to by their doctors, in the face of ignorance. And, truth to tell, ignorance abounds side by side with neat blocks of precise scientific knowledge brought into medicine in recent years.

It is no new thing. In 1876, on the occasion of the U.S. centennial, a book entitled *A Century of American Medicine, 1776-1876*, was published. The five authors were indisputable authorities in their several fields, from the faculties of Harvard, Columbia and Jefferson Medical College. The book is a summary of the major achievements in American medicine of the previous century. The optimistic last sentence of the book is perhaps more telling than the writers may have realized: "It is better to have a future than a past." A very large part of the past in that century of medicine was grim.

Early on, there was no such thing as therapeutic science and, beyond the efforts by a few physicians to classify human diseases and record the natural history of clinical phenomena, no sort of reliable empirical experience beyond anecdotes. Therapeutics was a matter of trial and error, with trials based on guesswork and guesses based mostly on a curious dogma inherited down the preceding centuries from Galen. Galen himself (c.130-c.200) had guessed wildly, and wrongly, in no fewer than 500 treatises on medicine and philosophy, that everything about human disease could be explained by the misdistribution of "humors" in the body.

Congestion of the various organs was the trouble to be treated according to Galen, and by the 18th century the notion had been elevated to a routine cure-all, or anyway treat-all: remove the excess fluid, one way or another. The ways were direct and forthright: open a vein and take away enough blood at a sitting to produce faintness and a bluish pallor, place suction cups on the skin to draw out lymph, administer huge doses of mercury or various plant extracts to cause purging and, if all else failed, induce vomiting. George Washington perhaps died of this therapy at the age of 67. Hale and hearty, he had gone for a horseback ride in the snow, later in the day had a fever and a severe sore throat, took to his bed and called in his doctors. His throat was wrapped in poultices, he was given warm vinegar and honey to gargle, and over the next two days he was bled from a vein for about two liters of blood. His last words to his physician were: "Pray take no more trouble about me. Let me go quietly."

Beginning around the 1830s, medicine looked at itself critically and began to change. Groups of doctors in Boston, Paris and Edinburgh raised new questions, regarded as heretical by most of their colleagues, concerning the real efficacy of the standard treatments of the day. Gradually, the first examples of science applied to clinical practice came somewhat informally into existence. Patients with typhoid fever and delirium tremens, two of the most uniformly fatal illnesses of the time, were divided into two groups, one treated by bleeding, cupping, purging and the other athletic feats of therapy, while the other group received nothing more than bed rest, nutrition and observation. The results were unequivocal and appalling, and by the mid-19th century medical treatment began to fall out of fashion and the era known as "therapeutic nihilism" was well launched.

The great illumination from this, the first revolution in medical practice in centuries, was the news that there were many diseases that were essentially self-limited. They would run their predictable course, if left to

run that course without meddling, and, once run, they would come to an end and certain patients would recover by themselves. Typhoid fever, for example, although an extremely dangerous and potentially fatal illness, would last for five or six weeks of fever and debilitation, but at the end about 70 percent of the patients would get well again. Lobar pneumonia would run for 10 to 14 days and then, in lucky, previously healthy patients, the famous "crisis" would take place and the patients would recover overnight. Patients with the frightening manifestations of delirium tremens only needed to be confined to a dark room for a few days and then were ready to come out and drink again. Some were doomed at the outset, of course, but not all. The new lesson was that treating them made the outcome worse rather than better.

It is difficult to imagine, from this distance, how overwhelming this news was to most physicians. The traditional certainty had been that every disease was aimed toward a fatal termination, and without a doctor and his energetic ministrations, or barring miraculous intervention by a higher force, all sick people would die of their diseases, whatever they were. To recognize that this was not so, and that with rare exceptions (rabies the most notable one) many sick people could get well by themselves, went against the accepted belief of the time. It took courage, and time, to shake off the old ideas.

Looking back over the whole embarrassing record, the historians of that period must be hard put for explanations of the steadily increasing demand, decade after decade, for more doctors, more clinics and hospitals, more health care. You might think that people would have turned away from the medical profession, or abandoned it. Especially since, throughout the last half of the 19th century and the full first third of this one, there was so conspicuously little that medicine had to offer in the way of effective drugs or indeed any kind of technology. Opium, digitalis, quinine and bromides (for the "nerves") were the mainstays. What else did physicians do during all those years that kept their patients calling and coming?

Well, they did a lot of nontechnology, and it was immensely effective. Mainly, they made diagnoses, explained matters to the patient and family, and then stood by, taking responsibility. To be sure, there were skeptics and critics all around, but they had always been around. Montaigne wrote bluntly, concerning doctors, "I have known many a good man among them, most worthy of affection. I do not attack them, but their art. It is only fear of pain and death, and a reckless search for cures, which blinds us. It is pure cowardice that makes us so gullible." Molière made delightful fun of doctors in his century. Dickens had some affection but no great respect for the doctors, most of them odd, bumbling eccentrics, who turned up as minor but essential characters in his novels. Shaw was a scathing critic of medicine and its pretensions, clear into modern times.

Today there are many very good physicians around, gifted and sought after, unquestionably better equipped than their predecessors to deal with life-threatening illnesses, trained to a level of comprehension of disease mechanisms beyond any 19th-century imagination. But the expressions used to describe earlier physicians—terms like "warm affection" and "unsullied purity"—have an anachronistic sound these days, and even "great usefulness" is open to public questioning. The modern doctor is literally surrounded by items of high technology capable of preventing or reversing most of the ailments that used to kill people in their youth and middle years—most spectacularly, the bacterial and viral infections chiefly responsible for the average life expectancy of less than 45 years in the 19th century. But medicine's agenda still contains a long list of fatal and incapacitating diseases, mostly the chronic disabilities of older people, and there is still no technology for these, not even yet a clear understanding of their underlying mechanisms.

The unequivocal successes include miliary tuberculosis, tertiary syphilis of the brain and heart, poliomyelitis, the childhood contagions, septicemias, typhoid, rheumatic fever and valvular heart disease, and most of the other great infectious diseases, now largely under control or already conquered. This was the result of the second big transformation in medicine, starting about 50 years ago with the introduction of the sulfonamides, penicillin and the other antibodies, gifts straight from science. The revolution continues in full force, but it is still in its early stages. With new technologies of fantastic power, such as recombinant DNA and monoclonal antibodies, disease mechanisms that were blank mysteries, totally inaccessible, just a few years back are now at least open to direct scrutiny in detail. The prospects for comprehending the ways in which cancer works, as well as other illnesses on what is becoming a long list, are now matters of high confidence and excitement among the younger researchers within the universities and in industrial laboratories.

But the future is not yet in sight, and medicine is still stuck, for an unknowable period, with formidable problems beyond the reach of therapy or prevention. The technologies for making an accurate diagnosis have been spectacularly effective, and at the same time phenomenally complex and expensive. This new activity is beginning to consume so much of the time of the students and interns, and the resources of the hospital in which they do their work, that there is less and less time for the patient. Instead of the long, leisurely ceremony of history taking, and the equally long ritual of the complete physical examination, and then the long explanations of what has gone wrong and a candid forecast of what may lie ahead, the sick person perceives the hospital as an enormous whirring machine, with all the professionals—doctors, nurses, medical students, aides and porters out in the corridors—at a dead run. Questionnaires, fed into computers, have replaced part of the history. Blood samples go off to the laboratory, and the CAT scan and Nuclear Magnetic Resonance machines are relied upon as more dependable than the physical examination.

Everyone, even the visitors, seems pressed for time; there is nev-

er enough time; the whole place is overworked to near collapse, out of breath, bracing for the next irremediable catastrophe. The old adage of Hippocrates, "Art is long, life is short," is speeded up to a blur.

It was into this environment that Dr. Konner stepped for his third-year training, and, as an already-trained anthropologist, he took notes. The leaders of the tribe, the elders, to his considerable surprise, were the interns, only two years ahead in their training, and just beyond them the residents. Almost all the medicine he would learn in that year would be taught to him by these young, harried and hurried, often bewildered neophytes, and his annotations at this stage of his education were touched frequently by some bitterness, even subdued rancor. As sometimes happens in anthropology, the professional observer doesn't much like the members of the society he has joined, and as also happens, they don't much like him.

But the personal conflicts aside, the deeper problem encountered by this student was the frenetic hyperactivity of everyone around him. His few really delightful experiences were on the one service where time held its own clock, and where the outcome was almost always decisive and satisfying: the obstetrical wards. He adored delivering babies; it is a pleasure to read of his pleasure. He might have liked surgery as a craft, but couldn't abide most of the young aggressive surgeons. He felt marginally at home among the psychiatrists, but was not much impressed by what they could do for their patients, especially those with severe psychoses.

The biggest difference between Konner's clerkship in 1983-84 and those of the students I remember from earlier decades—all the way back 52 years to my own third year at Harvard—seems to be the near total absence of senior physicians. As I recall, they were always near at hand, in and out of the wards, making rounds at all hours, displaying for the students' benefit the complete repertoire of seasoned, highly skilled doctors.

He mentions only a few such figures, and they seem to have left little impression on him; he does not write about their presence the way a young student would describe his role models. The real instructors were the novice physicians serving internships and residencies in medical specialties, and the professors were off somewhere else. If Konner's memory is accurate, medical school has changed a lot in recent years.

And perhaps, to some degree anyway, it has. Everyone is too busy, urgently doing something else, and there is no longer enough time for the old meditative, speculative ward rounds or the amiable conversations at bedside. The house staff, all of them—interns, residents, junior fellows in for the year on training fellowships from the National Institutes of Health—are careening through the corridors on their way to the latest emergency, or deciphering computer messages from the diagnostic laboratories, or drawing blood and injecting fluids, or admitting in a rush the newest patient. The professors are elsewhere, trying to allocate their time between writing out their research requests, doing or at least supervising the research in their laboratories, and seeing their own patients.

Konner finished medical school and wrote his book, and that seems to have been that. He decided against an internship, and is back in place as a professor of anthropology, evidently content. However, he does not have prescriptions to offer for fixing the things he perceives as wrong in medical education. Nor do I, except for two proposals, more like obsessive wishes for the future than a recipe for the present. My first hope is for removal of substantial parts of the curriculum in the first two years, making enough room for a few courses in medical ignorance, so that students can start out with a clear view of the things medicine does not know. My second hope is for more research into the mechanisms of the still-unsolved list of human diseases. The trouble with medicine today is that we simply do not know enough; we are still a largely ignorant profession, facing an array of illnesses that we do not really understand, unable to do much beyond trying to make the right diagnosis, shoring things up whenever we can by one halfway technology or another. (The transplantations of hearts, kidneys, livers and lungs are the only measures available when we lack comprehension of the events responsible for the prior destruction of such organs.) A great deal of the time and energy expended in a modern hospital is taken up by efforts to put off end game.

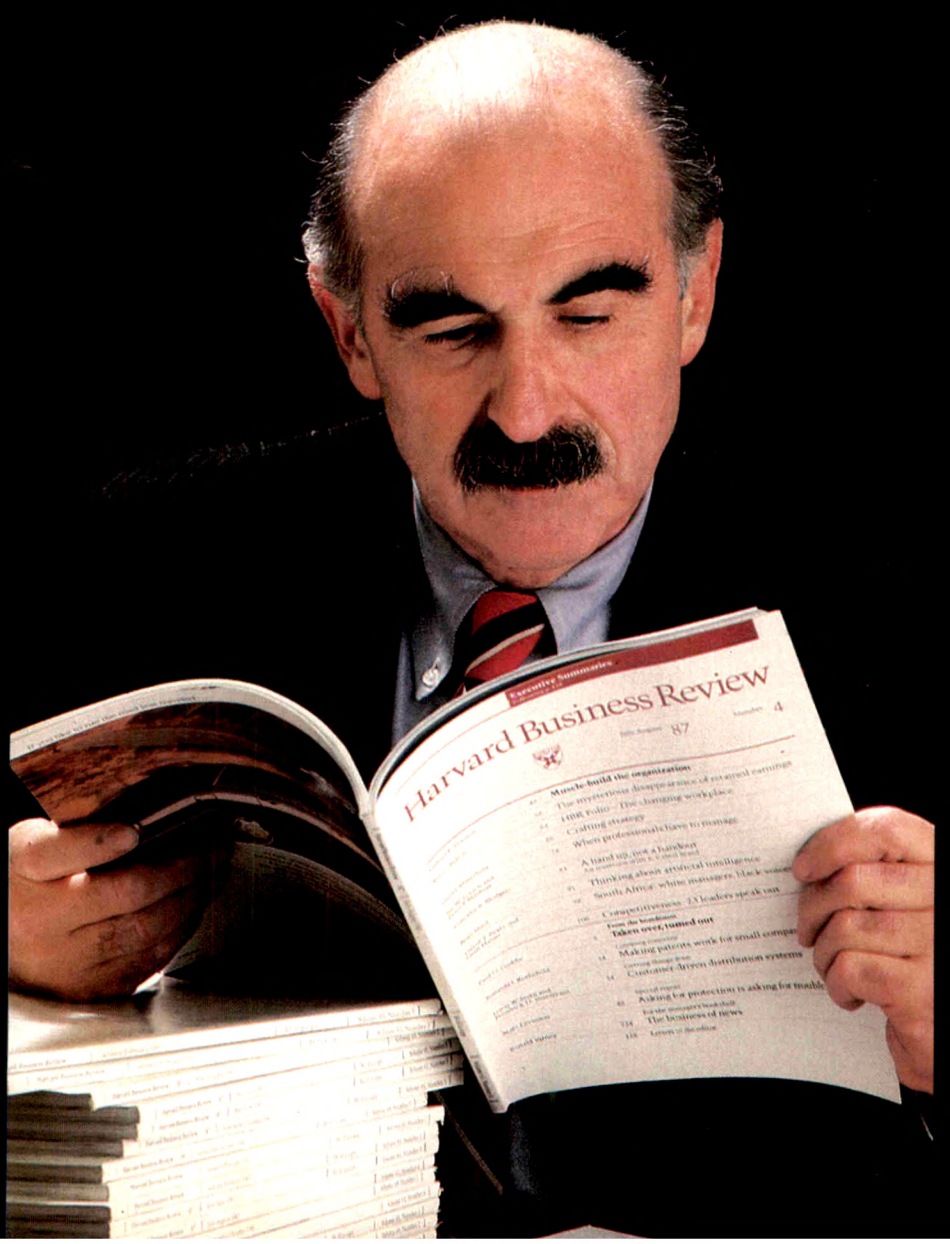
We will be obliged to go on this way and at steadily increasing expense, as far as I can see, until we are rid of disease—at least rid of the ailments that now dominate the roster and fill the clinics and hospitals. This is not asking for as much as one might think. We will never be free of our minor, self-limited ills, nor should we be planning on postponing dying beyond the normal human span of living—the 70's and 80's for most of us, the 90's for the few more (or less) lucky among us. But there is a great deal we will be able to do as soon as we have learned what to do, both for curing and preventing. It can never be done by guessing, as the profession learned in earlier centuries. Nor can very much be changed by the trendy fashions in changed "lifestyles," all the magazine articles to the contrary; dieting, jogging and thinking different thoughts may make us feel better while we are in good health, but they will not change the incidence or outcome of most of our real calamities. Everyone should stop smoking; but we are still obliged, like it or not, to rely on science for any hope of solving such biological puzzles as Alzheimer's disease, schizophrenia, cancer, coronary thrombosis, stroke, multiple sclerosis, diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, cirrhosis, chronic nephritis and now, topping the list, AIDS. When we have gained a clear comprehension, in detail, of what has gone wrong in each of these cases, medicine will be earning its keep. ♦

A MAGAZINE FOR MANAGERS

A new editor has made the *Harvard Business Review* increasingly the magazine of choice for corporate executives around the world.

By Shlomo Maital

Theodore Levitt. Photograph by Richard Howard.



In the last couple of years, editor Theodore Levitt has made dramatic changes in one of the oldest and most prestigious publications of international business (some 17 percent of whose readers live outside of North America). An intellectual who quotes Goethe and Hegel, he has made the Harvard Business Review *more lively, more market-oriented, and more of a magazine for "practicing business people." Fully aware that the* Harvard Business Review *is as famous an international institution as the Harvard Business School, Levitt has been telling corporate managers around the world to listen to their customers, and has been practicing what he preaches by listening to his readers. How should managers read the* HBR*? "Don't read it all," says Levitt. "If you do, you probably are not a good manager; you're trying to do everything, know everything. Read selectively."*

In this article Israeli economist Shlomo Maital, recently a visiting professor of economics at MIT, explains how the Review*'s success reflects the down-to-earth marketing principles of its editor.*

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The lady turns 65 this month. Far from retiring, she is getting a face-lift and stepping out. Though long in tooth, she is decorative as well as useful; no corporate reception lobby would be without her. Though venerable, she tries not to be stodgy or repetitive—and at times succeeds. She is swimming in money, but remembers the early, lean days and battles complacency.

The lady is the *Harvard Business Review*. Under its new editor, the marketing guru Theodore Levitt, this once-dowdy business bimonthly, which almost expired during the Depression, is kicking up its heels and trying to improve on an already phenomenally successful formula—one that generates a quarter of a million subscribers, sales of more than two million reprints and 90,000 copies of article anthologies a year, and customers for an on-line data base. One subscriber in six lives outside North America, reading one of the 11 foreign-language editions, including Danish (*Harvard Borsen*), Italian (*Harvard Espansione*) and, inevitably, Japanese (*Diamond*). With each issue passed along to four or five other people, the world according to *HBR* reaches up to a million and a half managers—half of them board chairmen, chief executive officers (CEOs), presidents, managing directors or other top corporate executives.

Like Kenneth Andrews, the longtime editor whom he succeeded two years ago, Levitt is a Harvard Business School professor. Born in Vollmerz, Germany, he came to America with his parents at the age of 10 in 1935. He has been at Harvard for nearly 30 years. Levitt speaks in measured, crafted sentences sprinkled with humor and literary references (Goethe, Hegel).

Levitt has had 25 articles published in *HBR*—more than any other individual. His best-known piece, "Marketing Myopia" (July-August 1960), has sold more than half a million reprints and was expanded into a book titled *Innovation in Marketing*. The article was a critique of shortsighted managers, for whom, said Levitt, "marketing is a stepchild." Some of the article's insights, in fact, could have been a blueprint for Levitt's restructuring of the *Review*.

Here is what Levitt preached in "Marketing Myopia," and how, as editor of the *Review*, he has practiced it.

What business are we in?

Railroads thought they were in the railroad business, not the transportation business, Levitt observed. Hollywood thought it was in the movie business, not the entertainment business. Both nearly expired as a result. *HBR*'s board frequently asks what business the magazine is in, and changing answers lead to changing strategy and content. The current answer, as Levitt sees it, is management education. "We are a general management journal," he says, "and our articles are for practicing business people. The objective of the *Review* is to set the agenda of management: what should managers be thinking about? What should they be acting on? We try to identify problems and help solve them."

William P. Mullane Jr., corporate vice-president of AT&T, agrees. "*HBR* helps you do your job better," he says. "*Business Week* and *Fortune* just ratchet up a bit the information you already have on a subject, and alert you to things other people are doing that you might want to consider. *HBR* helps you do a particular job better; it may alter the way you approach a subject. For instance, the July-August [1987] issue's roundtable of how 23 leaders look at international competitiveness is going to make it a lot easier for me to answer questions about those problems at an international telecommunications exposition."

Among *HBR*'s most avid readers are some in an allied business, management consulting. "*HBR* is instrumental in helping us gain perspective on what's going on," says Michael O'Hara, director of marketing communications at Arthur D. Little Inc., and one of more than 100 *HBR* subscribers at the company. "Being in the management- and technology-consulting business, the very nature of our broad-based business makes it imperative that we avail ourselves of all the tools we can."

An industry is a customer-satisfying process, not a goods-producing process. An industry begins with the customer and his needs, not with a patent, a raw material or a selling skill.

The *Review* goes to great lengths to listen to its customers. "We do a readership survey for every single issue," says Levitt. "Eight hundred readers are surveyed. They are asked to rate what they got out of each article, on a scale of zero to five. We try to check how we are doing and measure our track record." The *Review*'s editors study the survey carefully.

"The seller takes his cues from the buyer in such a way that the product becomes a consequence of the marketing effort, not vice versa," Levitt wrote in "Marketing Myopia." Though in that article he emphasized the difference between selling ("tricks and techniques of getting people to exchange their cash for your product") and marketing ("a tightly integrated effort to discover, create, arouse and satisfy customer needs"), *HBR* is not above getting into the trenches with some frenetic selling. Nearly six million direct-mail solicitations for subscriptions are sent out each year. *HBR* even has its own slogan, just like soap or mouthwash: "Reach for the *Review*."

"Our articles are 25 percent shorter," Levitt says about changes he has made since taking over, "and have more pace and rhythm. We urge authors to use more active verbs, without compromising their voice."

Not all of the *Review*'s customers are enthralled. One public-relations professional complained about *HBR*'s print style and hard-to-read graphics. Levitt sprinkles *New Yorker*-type cartoons and other drawings through the editorial matter, a policy that draws some sniffs from academic readers.

Levitt has been quoted as saying that *HBR* is written by people who can't write, for people who don't read. He likes the remark to be put in context, however, so as not to offend readers and authors. "Our editorial challenge," he says, "is this: what we've got are specialists in various fields. Some have doctorates. The Ph.D. degree beats any literary ability out of you. If your thesis is too readable, your committee thinks you are too superficial and lacking in scientific care. Some are managers. They are not used to writing. At the same time, our readers are pressed for time and are used to brief communication. The challenge of the *Review* is to appreciate the two parties, readers and writers. An important part of my job is trying to make it work. We do work hard with authors."

How should people read *HBR*? "Don't read it all," says Levitt. "If you do, you probably are not a good manager; you are trying to do everything, know everything. Read selectively."

Levitt has altered *HBR*'s style and "voice"—for instance, publishing an interview on management style with Red Auerbach, president and former coach of the Boston Celtics basketball team, and an article on the environment by actor Robert Redford. But Levitt claims that its content has not changed materially. *HBR* still tells its readers to watch their Cs and Qs—competitiveness and product quality. It has been harping on America's loss of competitive edge for 20 years, well before this concern was generally shared.

HBR frequently argues with itself. For years, it berated managers for their short-term, myopic fixation on bottom-line profits, and recently chastised them for justifying short-run losses in the search for distant, elusive profits. Dozens of articles have focused on the need for raising labor productivity; in his 1986 article "The Productivity Parodox," cited by an independent board as the best *Review* article of the year, Wickham Skinner said that productivity growth is a false idol, because labor costs are such a small fraction of total expenses.

Management must think of itself as providing customer-creating value satisfactions. It must push this idea into every nook and cranny of the organization with the kind of flair that excites and stimulates the people in it.

The rewards of publishing an article in *HBR* are great; Levitt says entire businesses have been founded on the strength of the authorship of a single article. The message reaches a powerful audience, worldwide. But reaching print in *HBR* is the editorial equivalent of Dante's *Inferno*. You must know the readers—their needs, knowledge and interests. You must write with style in a way that informs and stimulates. You may publish but nearly perish in the process, for you must first satisfy a large, experienced and critical group of editors.

As editor, Levitt has altered the magazine's style and voice, but its content has not changed materially. It still tells its readers to watch their Cs and Qs—competitiveness and product quality. It has been harping on American competitiveness for 20 years, well before this concern was generally shared.

Each year, 1500 articles and about the same number of queries flood into *HBR*'s quarters. Yet *HBR* editors do not just reap the bountiful harvest nature provides, but plant their own seeds by initiating articles. Of the 1500 submissions, 100 or so reach print.

Each article, solicited or not, is read by one of 11 editors who are trained to ask: is it new (or old, but said with new, compelling logic)? Is it relevant and interesting? Is it useful? Does it have the ring of authority? According to Levitt, each article must pass two acid tests—it must be readable and understandable to nonspecialists, and, at the same time, be judged accurate by experts.

Who writes for *HBR*? The majority of authors are professors, of whom half or more are from Harvard Business School; 20 percent are executives; 10 percent are management consultants; and the remaining 20 percent are government officials, professionals and others. Since one article in four comes from Harvard Business School, the charge of "in-

The magazine is part of the educational program of the Harvard Business School, which is very operations-oriented, concerned with making things work now, and determined to learn from present practice. The school faculty studies what managers do, and is deeply interested in current practice. This jibes closely with the magazine's focus and personality.

breeding" is often leveled. Since everyone has access to *HBR* in open, fair competition, why do the odds seem tilted in favor of the local team?

"We are a part of the educational program of the Harvard Business School," Levitt answers. "The school is very operations-oriented, concerned with making things work now, and determined to learn from present practice. The case method is a reflection of that. The school faculty studies what managers actually do, and is deeply interested in current practice, in what works." This, he says, jibes closely with *HBR*'s focus and personality.

Just how tough it is to satisfy *HBR* customers is shown by the comments of two executives, one of whom believes that the *Review* is too different from its parent, Harvard Business School, and one who believes that they are too much alike.

"*HBR* is not informative enough, not targeted to our specific problems or the way we run our business," says Donald G. Fischer, chairman and CEO of The Gap Inc., a chain of stores that sell jeans and other youth-oriented fashions. "I think it might be of more value if it got down to real specifics—on compensation systems, or how to offer incentives to employees or how you become a more international company. *HBR* doesn't tell you that. I find Harvard Business School case studies more interesting than *HBR* articles."

"They take findings from research and put it in a form accessible for managers," says Mary Anne Devanna, editor-in-chief of Columbia Business School's magazine *Columbia Journal of World Business*. "They don't begin to address issues in depth. This is not a criticism. I don't think you can produce a volume of work that simultaneously addresses the major issues, like global competition. There simply isn't the foundation of research that exists for this."

In his controversial book, *What They Don't Teach You at Harvard Business School*, Mark McCormack, marketing agent for sports celebrities, wrote: "The best lesson anyone can learn from business school is an awareness of what it can't teach you—all the ins and outs of everyday business life. Those ins and outs are largely a self-learning process." According to his view, neither *HBR* nor the business school can teach "street smarts," which he defines as "the ability to make active positive use of your instincts, insights and perceptions" in order to "read people" correctly.

McCormack is right about one thing: judging by *HBR* reprint best sellers, managers are keenly interested in reading people and in learning how best to motivate them. The all-time best-selling reprint is Frederick Herzberg's article "One More Time: How Do You Motivate Employees?" (January-February 1968); 1.2 million copies have been sold to date.

Herzberg's article argues: "If you have someone on a job, use him. If you can't use him on the job, get rid of him, either via automation or by selecting someone with lesser ability. If you can't use him and you can't get rid of him, you will have a motivation problem." The only way to motivate a worker, Herzberg believes, is to give him challenging work and responsibility. Like many classic *HBR* articles, Herzberg's piece is a short, punchy elaboration of the obvious—one that managers find sensible and useful. Some articles seem immortal, for no clear reason. A 1952 article by the psychologists Carl Rogers and F.J. Roethlisberger, entitled "Barriers and Gateways to Communication," sold 10,948 reprints last year.

In truth, there is no such thing as a growth industry. There are only companies organized and operated to create and capitalize on growth opportunities.

Can Levitt keep *HBR* growing? After hitting a Depression low of 2000, subscriptions soared in the postwar period—from 15,000 in 1947 to 135,000 in 1972 and 200,000 in 1978. Growth has slowed since then, with subscriber rolls rising by an average of only two percent a year. Has *HBR*'s vein of customers been mined out? Perhaps a source of future growth lies just under *HBR*'s nose—Harvard Business School alumni. Only 15 percent subscribe at present. Columbia's Devanna sees this as an indication of marketing acumen, as the *Review* "has been successful at marketing outside its base of strength."

"The history of every dead and dying 'growth industry' shows a self-deceiving cycle of bountiful expansion and undetected decay," wrote Levitt in "Marketing Myopia." To survive, he suggests, companies "must plot the obsolescence of what now produces their livelihood."

In the ivied halls of 350-year-old Harvard University, where the winds of change barely flutter a flag, how does Levitt plot the obsolescence of a successful institution, the *Harvard Business Review*, that is no less venerable or traditionbound?

The chief executive "has to know precisely where he himself wants to go, and to make sure the whole organization is enthusiastically aware of where that is," he wrote. "This is a first requisite of leadership, for *unless he knows where he is going, any road will take him there*." Even if you don't reach for the *Review*, try watching it. The roads Levitt's marketing magic selects will doubtless head for interesting and unconventional territory. ♦

ETHICS IN EMBRYO
A Symposium

Five experts on genetic engineering discuss age-old ethical questions about which human characteristics are 'good' and who is to make the decisions.

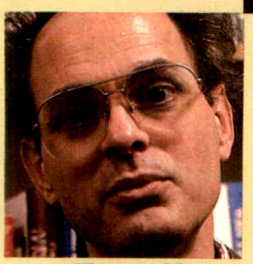
A new technology will often set in motion an anguished debate between those who believe in the inevitable progress brought by science and those who argue that unprincipled science will subvert the moral order and diminish the value of human life. The two groups usually agree on only one point—that public debate on these issues begins too late. In anticipation of this familiar complaint, Harper's Magazine *assembled a small group of people associated with the current debates about fetal brain implants, sex determination before conception, and genetic engineering, subjects that arouse strong emotions and generate complex ethical, metaphysical and political questions. Is human life more than the sum of its biochemistry? If a technology exists, does that mean it must be used? If the answer is no, can "bad" technologies really be legislated out of existence? And finally—a dilemma with echoes of Socrates and Plato—if genetic engineering is practiced in an attempt to create a "good" person for a "good" society, what do we mean by "good"?*

These and other questions are raised in this symposium in which three proposed biotechnologies—not yet practicable but plausible within the bounds of current laboratory research—are debated by a panel of experts.

Lewis H. Lapham, the moderator, is editor of Harper's Magazine. *Nancy Neveloff Dubler is the director of legal and ethical issues at Montefiore Medical Center in New York City. She has written widely about medical dilemmas in contemporary health care. Thomas H. Murray is the director of the Center for Bioethics at Case Western Reserve University Medical School in Cleveland, Ohio. Jeremy Rifkin is president of the Foundation on Economic Trends in Washington, D.C., and the author of* Algeny, Declaration of a Heretic *and the recently published* Time Wars: The Primary Conflict in Human History. *Lee Salk, clinical professor of psychology at Cornell University Medical Center and professor of child development at Brown University, has written nine books on the parent-child relationship.*


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1
Fetal Brain Implants

CURRENT TECHNOLOGY

Swedish scientists have relieved the symptoms of Parkinson's disease by implanting fetal brain tissue in patients' brains. The fetal tissue causes regeneration in the surrounding brain tissue.

PROPOSED TECHNOLOGY

Scientists discover that fetal brain implants restore mental lucidity in patients suffering from Alzheimer's disease.

LAPHAM: Let's say the breakthrough of using fetal brains to reverse Alzheimer's was announced this morning. This means the demand for fetal brain tissue will no longer be confined to the small number of Parkinson's patients. Now almost everyone will have a grandfather or grandmother who could benefit. Do you think there's a problem with the widespread use of fetal brains as a routine therapy?

DUBLER: That depends on the restrictions applied, the assumptions about the fetus and the context. Fetuses deserve respect. The principle would demand that nothing demeaning or repugnant be done with the fetus.

Let us assume a woman opts for an abortion and the fetus that is removed has brain tissue which could be effectively transplanted. If the mother had no objection, then it could be used. There should be a requirement that the arrangement not be commercial. The woman should not profit from the procedure. The issue of profit to the physician is slightly more complicated.

LAPHAM: Why is the profit motive repugnant? We sell blood.

MURRAY: Actually we sell very little blood in this country. The overwhelming majority is donated. We used to think that you had to pay people to get them to give blood. But that turns out not to be true. The American public is overwhelmingly against a commercial system for blood. They would probably feel the same repugnance to a market in fetal brains. One of the primary reasons we donate blood, organs and other kinds of tissues is to affirm our ties with the strangers among whom we live. It is one of the few ways left open for us to minister to their needs, particularly their health needs.

LAPHAM: I really don't understand the objection to the profit motive.

DUBLER: We would not want to live in a society where women became pregnant for the purpose of making money. But if you go back to blood donation—and I think Tom Murray is right, that is the closest analogy—we discovered that to maintain the highest-quality blood it was unwise to have people sell their blood. The profit motive, it turns out, encourages blood donations from hepatitis carriers. But more than that, you don't want to encourage commerce in human parts.

LAPHAM: Let's say there's no commercial motivation: should you use discarded fetal brains to treat Alzheimer's?

DUBLER: In organ donations, when someone dies, we approach the family and say, "Now that this person is dead, someone else may benefit from what remains physiologically of this person." We ask the family for their consent. That seems to me to be the closest analogy we have.

LAPHAM: So that you would ask women coming into abortion clinics routinely to sign a waiver allowing the fetal tissue to be used?

DUBLER: Yes. It would be a two-step process. First, society reaches a judgment, either through its legislative process or through a combination of political and administrative processes, that this is a good for society and should be encouraged. Step two, the individual involved—the mother—can refuse or consent to have those fetal parts used.

RIFKIN: There's a broader question that needs to be looked at. For the last hundred years in Western medical science, there has been a shift toward utilitarianism, toward short-term benefits to individuals. However, as utilitarianism has thrived, it has brought a gradual desacralization of the life process. Science and technology in Western civilization have increasingly reduced living things to dead material for manipulation. We need to ask ourselves: is life more than the chemicals that make it up? Is life more than tissues and cells and nucleic-acid sequences?

MURRAY: I don't think utilitarianism or reductionism is the issue here. In fact, if you consider how the theologians have approached organ transplantation, they can, in the end, justify organ transplantation precisely because they believe in the sacredness of life.

DUBLER: I am a bit surprised, Jeremy, by your answer. When you sign an organ-donation card, or when a family agrees to an organ transplant after a person is brain-dead, that is a benefit to others and not a detriment to the individual. It enhances the sanctity of life by permitting others to enjoy a better quality of life.

RIFKIN: Let me try to place this in another time context. I'm not talking about the immediate moment; I'm arguing about a longer time span. If we look at the last 50 to 75 years of medical advances anthropologically we find that, step-by-step, we are reducing life to the chemical components that make it up. And we're doing it in the name of good, in the name of providing benefits for our fellow human beings. But we're going to have to look at the long-term implications of doing that. I think they are profound and disturbing, and again they get to the heart of our world view.

By the time the ethics of a new technology are debated, it's generally

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too late to change course. The technology is already ensconced in the marketplace. The religious community, the social philosophers and the ethicists—much to my chagrin—have been edged out of public deliberation in any meaningful way on these technologies.

Murray: You could make those arguments about almost any earlier technology. Penicillin was a new technology once; it was discovered in 1928 and made available in the '40s. At the same time you could have said: we don't know all the effects—more children will survive childhood; more old people will live longer because we can now cure them of pneumonia at age 73 instead of just letting them die. We could have faced exactly the same questions.

Salk: Take the case of diabetes: insulin treatment has allowed millions of people to reach reproductive age who have a diabetic tendency. Insulin has introduced into the population a high incidence of people prone to diabetes.

My own research on adolescent suicide suggests that complications during pregnancy, labor and delivery seem to increase the likelihood of suicide during adolescence and perhaps later in life. Now that we can save more babies, we might be, in a sense, tampering with nature's quality control.

Thirty years ago we did not engage in heroics in the delivery room. Newborns were allowed to die if there were any complications. Today those same babies survive and seem to be at risk for problems later. Maybe we're introducing certain weaknesses into the species. That's the disadvantage and it suggests a much larger question.

Survival of the fittest in the evolutionary process and natural selection may no longer be the only factors influencing the course of life. We have reached the point where we can control our evolution and change the world we live in without waiting for natural forces to operate. We have become the force that can control our evolution. The problem is how we are going to shape it. We will indeed be doing that and manipulating things that were once considered totally unacceptable. Implanting fetal brains in adults' brains is only the beginning.

2
Sex Determination Before Conception

Current Technology

Male- and female-producing sperm can be separated by machine. Artificial insemination then gives parents the opportunity to choose the sex of their child. The success rate is 95 percent when seeking boys, slightly less for girls.

Proposed Technology

A spermicide that kills either male- or female-producing sperm provides near statistical certainty in determining the sex of the child.

Lapham: Let's suppose that this spermicide—let's call it Sexselex—can determine the sex of the child. Now, I'm the father of, say, three sons, and I want to have a daughter. I want to buy Sexselex. What do you tell me?

Dubler: You can't buy it. There are certain technologies that could be so disruptive to the basic fabric of society that we will say they are excluded from the marketplace. Whatever shadow of that technology you can achieve through more natural processes, you're welcome to do.

Salk: I have no doubt that we will use this technology, but I have real problems with it. If we begin to manipulate the existing balance between genders in any society, we will have a major disruptive effect on society.

If a man and a woman want to bring a child into this world only if it is a certain gender, they shouldn't have a child in the first place. The nurturing of a child should not depend on its gender.

Lapham: Wait. I'm allowed to take an aspirin. I'm allowed to take penicillin. I'm allowed to take all kinds of products that are not natural. But now you're telling me that to conceive a child I must return to the state of nature.

Dubler: You're also allowed to take medication that will prevent conception. But there are certain parts of the reproductive process that properly lie beyond individual manipulation by scientific technology.

Lapham: Do you think you have any chance explaining that to a desperate father?

Dubler: I think that there are some plights of the human condition for which there are impermissible answers. This is one. I'm sorry that you have only three sons. I agree that daughters are highly valuable. But it is not a problem to which society permits a specific and effective solution.

Lapham: Even though I can buy it in the drugstore?

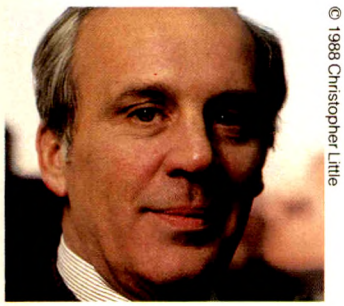
Dubler: I would make every effort to keep it out by having the government refuse to license it.

Rifkin: This example forces us to address what's really happening here. As we move out of the Industrial Age into the Biotechnical Age, we're increasingly able to manipulate living things for our own advantage. What we're really talking about is engineering the life process. So let's begin by understanding what engineering is.

We are introducing technological principles into reproduction. We are exploiting living things with the same methodology used during the Industrial Age to exploit inanimate things. Engineering is about quality controls, design and building predictability into the product.

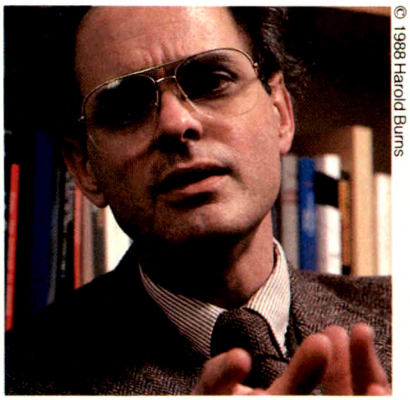
Salk: It is disruptive to any culture to interfere with the balance of male and female. But it's inevitable; it's going to happen. With so many new technologies, we look back and wonder, "How did we ever adapt?" Well, we did adapt.

Lewis Lapham



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Thomas Murray



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Nancy Dubler



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LAPHAM: But would you try to legislate this technology out of existence?

SALK: My approach would be for public education to convince people it's unwise to do this. It may be better to develop a conscience than to develop legislation. People may act on their conscience.

MURRAY: We shouldn't let this product on the market. The reason Lee Salk and Nancy Dubler offer is cogent, but it's not the only reason. If we let you choose your child's sex, we're saying it is socially legitimate to get pregnant, test the fetus and decide whether to keep it or not.

LAPHAM: Don't we do that already?

MURRAY: We do for certain limited purposes. We use amniocentesis to look for certain serious detectable disorders. Should we also use it to screen for gender? I think not. Look what the baby becomes—a commodity just like your car. You want it with air conditioning? This one doesn't have air conditioning, so you return it to the manufacturer.

3

Genetic Profiles of Test-Tube Babies

CURRENT TECHNOLOGY

In vitro fertilization involves the withdrawal of about six eggs from a woman. All the eggs are fertilized with the father's sperm. Those eggs that show abnormal cell division in the early stages are destroyed. The remaining fertilized eggs are returned to the mother's womb for development.

PROPOSED TECHNOLOGY

The woman takes fertility drugs, or is "superovulated," to produce around 30 eggs. These are fertilized and genetically profiled to determine whether the embryo has diseases, such as Huntington's chorea; afflictions, such as Down's syndrome or even simple astigmatism; and finally for characteristics such as eye color, skin color and physical imperfections.

LAPHAM: I've got 30 fertilized eggs here. Am I allowed to throw out the embryos with Down's syndrome or serious disorders?

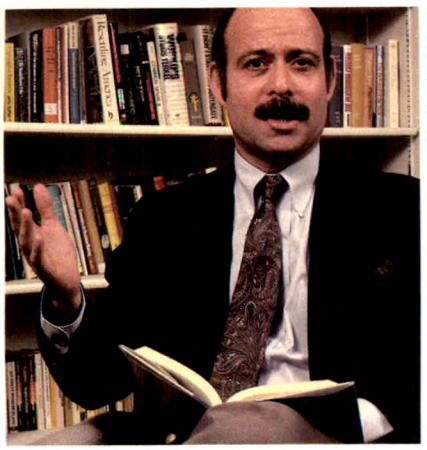
DUBLER: Yes. We look to find out if there is Down's syndrome or any other affliction that we recognize as exceptionally painful and difficult, those that are not a "good" in human beings.

LAPHAM: How do we know which traits are "not a good in human beings"?

RIFKIN: Exactly. Every year we locate more and more genetic markers for single-gene diseases. When the technology exists to remove them, there will be parental pressure to do so. Soon parents are going to have a genetic readout of all the traits they can potentially pass on to their children. Parents will become statisticians. They're going to ask, "Do I want to burden my child with a particular trait?"

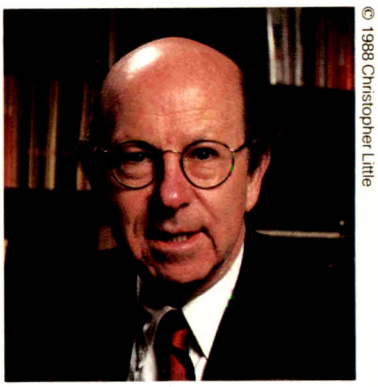
Where do you draw the line? There are several thousand recessive traits. Leukemia can kill your child at three, heart disease at 30 and Alzheimer's at 50. At what point do you say no? Society might even legislate or compel parents not to pass on certain traits

Jeremy Rifkin



© 1988 Ken Heinen

Lee Salk



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because of the health cost likely to be incurred.

We're forcing a profound change in the parent-child relationship. As we introduce predictability, we create more pressure for perfect eggs, perfect sperm and perfect embryos.

Murray: Let's make a distinction. With a disease, a child is sick and in pain. And there are a relative handful of genetic disorders that cause great suffering. But with a recessive trait the gene is not expressed, so the child is not ill. There are thousands of those, so why remove them?

Lapham: Let's get back to my petri dish. You've got 30 fertilized eggs. You're going to allow me to take out Down's. What else are you going to let me take out?

Dubler: Tay-Sachs, Huntington's. If we have the same information about early-onset Alzheimer's as we do about Tay-Sachs, I would include early-onset Alzheimer's.

Lapham: I'm down to 26 eggs. Now let's suppose the 25th one has got a harelip. Am I allowed to take that one out?

Dubler: You're not going to test for that, so you're not going to know.

Lapham: As soon as I get the technology, I'm going to test for that. Rifkin is right. Once you let me take out Tay-Sachs, there's no stopping.

Dubler: I don't agree with that at all. There is a fundamental assumption in this discussion with which I disagree profoundly: that we as a society cannot make and enforce decisions. We as a society could have a reproductive policy stating that we could test for those conditions that burden the life to such a degree that it is permissible to exclude them. The number of conditions would be limited. Aside from those, you would not gather the information. It would be regulated the same way we now regulate research.

Rifkin: How do you determine "the conditions that burden life"? What about a disease that kills at age five or one that kills at age 30?

Dubler: Dying of Huntington's is a terrible death, and I think that society has a shared perception on certain diseases. We can draw lines. We are human beings; we deal with difficult problems all the time.

Murray: Jeremy, you lack faith in our ability to make judgments, yet we make judgments all the time. We decide what is a disease and what is not a disease, what's a deformity and what's not a deformity. For example, society says: "If you have a harelip, that's a deformity, and it's enough of one to warrant trying to correct it. We'll even help you pay for it."

That's a social consensus. Whereas if you want a "tummy tuck" because you don't like your paunch, we say we'll let you do it, but we sure as hell won't pay for it. We draw that line. You may want to argue with me about how to draw it, but we draw it nonetheless.

Lapham: But our "society" is defined by the marketplace. And a capitalist ethic does not allow the state to say: do this, do that.

Dubler: Sure it does. Over the last decade we as a society have said there are certain values in medical research which we will support and ones we will prohibit. For example, you can't do research on children where there is more than a "minimal risk to the child" unless there is an overwhelming compensating benefit. So we've taken medical research, which is also driven by the marketplace, by gain, by ego, by position, and we've said, no, there are certain things that you can't do.

Let me come back to our petri dish. There are certain things you can't do. You can take out Huntington's and you can take out early Alzheimer's and then you are left with a certain number of fertilized eggs. Here's what you do: you will line them up, you will take the first one in line, and you will implant it. I don't think that's any more difficult than regulating research.

Rifkin: What we're really talking about is eugenics. Professional ethicists keep looking out the front door saying, "I hope this technology isn't abused by a particular government or a particular ideological system. I hope another Adolf Hitler doesn't come along."

Meanwhile a new eugenics has quietly slipped in the back door. You can hear it in our conversation today. We're talking about commercial eugenics. We want perfect babies. We want perfect plants and animals. We want a better economy. There's no

evil intent here. The road to the brave new world is paved with good intentions.

Step-by-step, we are deciding to engineer parts of the genetic code of living things. Two important questions emerge: if we're going to engineer the genetic code, what criteria does this society establish for determining good and bad, useful and dysfunctional genes? And I would like to know whether there is an institution anyone here would trust with the ultimate authority to decide the genetic blueprints for a living thing?

Murray: Wait, you asked me to come up with a criterion for a disease everyone thinks should be engineered out. Here it is: a disease that causes a prolonged, painful and undignified death. How does that sound?

Rifkin: Would you feel qualified to be on the President's Commission set up to advise on this?

Murray: You never answer a question.

Rifkin: Would you feel qualified to give advice and consent as to what genetic changes in the biological code of human beings are permissible?

Murray: Yes. I wouldn't feel qualified to make the ultimate judgment, but I would feel qualified to become part of the discussion. The alternative is to do nothing. Again, you hold no faith in our ability to make any distinctions, any reasonable judgments.

Rifkin: I have faith in humanity's ability to make reasonable judgments. The question is: who is making the judgments and on behalf of whom? What are the preconceptions and central assumptions that we're using?

Salk: Let's look for a moment at a technology developed two decades ago and see where that's taken us. Neonatology, the medical science devoted to troubled newborns, emerged as a subspecialty around 1965 and created a new breed of physicians. Have we made reasonable judgments in this field? What I see is a technology driving these doctors to save babies at the lowest birth weight possible. Today I see babies born in our hospital with multiple handicaps. We can save a 600-gram baby, but I don't think the doctors are as concerned with the quality of life as they should be.

Dubler: I disagree with that entirely. They're very concerned, although puzzled as to how to determine it. They're very aware that it would be unethical to save a 200-gram infant.

Salk: But I'm not sure it's ethical to save a 1000-gram infant with multiple handicaps.

Dubler: Many neonatologists would agree.

Salk: But no one is setting up any criteria that they can abide by. Thirty years ago, when a baby was born with respiratory distress, the parents were told, "This is God's will. You would have had a multiply handicapped child. It's better to let it go." And people accepted that. They had no problems with that at all.

Dubler: I disagree with almost every one of your statements. There are some babies who are so clearly in intractable pain that they cannot lead any sort of reasonable life. At that point they are let go. Those decisions are made carefully and adequately on moral bases by the medical team and the parents.

Neonatology is a good example where principles—incorporating both science and ethics—have provided real guideposts for care-givers. Similarly, I think a standard for genetic decisions could be developed along the lines of Tom Murray's criterion: when suffering and disease and an undignified death are inevitable.

Murray: It's hard to imagine a culture that would not spare people suffering and painful death, as long as it didn't come at a terrible moral price.

Lapham: What I hear Nancy and Tom saying is that you are prepared to breed out pain or death in our petri dish, but you're not prepared to breed anything in.

Dubler: Correct.

Murray: Right.

Lapham: Why not breed in? We could solve the problem of racism, for instance. Let's make skin color universal in my petri dish. Why won't you let me do that?

Murray: Is that the way to respond to a social problem like discrimination?

Lapham: You let me prevent hideous death, but you won't let me put in any "positive" traits.

Rifkin: When the day comes that we can make these decisions, we will probably be less tolerant of the disabled because we will perceive them as defective products. Also, we're likely to see the beginning of a prejudice based on genetic type, on genetic readout, which is likely to be just as virulent as prejudice based on race or ethnic background.

Should your employer know that you have a tendency toward Alzheimer's? Should your school system know the genetic readout of your child? Should a government have these records? I suspect we're going to see the beginning of a biological caste system in the next two or three centuries. We may be seeing the gradual emergence of eugenics in civilization.

Murray: You're using the word *eugenics* a little too cavalierly here. Eugenics means the management of the genetic stock of a population.

Rifkin: To improve it.

Murray: To "improve" it, as if we know what that means.

Rifkin: That's the problem with engineering for improvement. Do you know of any engineer who wants only to make technology somewhat efficient but not perfectly efficient? Do you know of any engineer who stops midway through the process and decides to accept less than the most efficient solution? I don't. Engineers want to continue the process until they have perfected the technology. Why would it be any different in genetic engineering than it is in mechanical or electrical or nuclear engineering?

Dubler: Because people are not bolts of steel.

Rifkin: But we are beginning to perceive living things as indistinguishable from bolts of steel.

Dubler: I don't accept that judgment.

Rifkin: It depends on what your highest value is. If your highest value is respect for life, then I would agree that we've got a fighting chance here. If, however, the highest values in civilization are efficiency, expediency and engineering values, then I would say we're in trouble.

Murray: If that's the way the val-

ues line up, we're in deep trouble. I think fortunately the values don't line up that way.

Rifkin: The problem with these different values is that they are being developed into a new sociology, one that goes hand-in-hand with genetic engineering. Increasingly we open up the newspaper and find articles saying we have located the newest gene governing personality or social behavior.

We're beginning to believe that our social behavior is a direct result of our genetic typing. Social biologists don't come right out and say, "It's all genetics; it's all inheritance." What they do say is more subtle: that genetic inheritance is the broad determinant of your personality. Environment, institutions and values play some role, they say, but it's a smaller role than we had thought.

What happens in a society that has both the technology to manipulate the genetic code and a social biology that suggests that we are no more or less than the genes that make us up? It's a dangerous combination, moving us ever closer to a eugenic civilization.

Murray: This is not the first sweeping intellectual change that mankind has experienced. I think Jeremy is right in saying that this technology challenges the way we think about ourselves. But then again so did Copernicus, so did Darwin, so did Freud. They challenged us to think about ourselves in entirely new ways—in ways at least as profound as those imposed by the genetic-engineering revolution. We still look at ourselves as creatures capable of dignity, capable of meaning, capable of morality.

Dubler: One example of individual choice—and a simple form of genetic engineering—is choosing your spouse. If you think, for example, that sociological characteristics are linked to behaviors that are determined by genes, then you ought not to choose someone to reproduce with who has a history of assaults or burglaries or murders.

Lapham: I don't understand what value system anybody at this table lives by. You'll allow me free choice with a spouse, but not with a child.

Salk: We'll allow you free choice about whether or not to have children.

Lapham: And you'll allow me to design my child, with enormously expensive neonatal care, private schools, child psychiatrists, Yale University.

Dubler: That's coping with your decisions.

Lapham: No. It's trying to imprint on my descendant a certain set of traits.

Dubler: You get to rear your child, that's all.

Lapham: I get to rear—not design—my child?

Dubler: Yes.

Rifkin: Wait a minute. What I gather from you is that some design is permissible and some isn't.

Dubler: To manipulate for a good—such as ruling out Huntington's—is different than designing.

Rifkin: To plan in advance the outcome of something: that's what design is. So what you really want is to eliminate the word *design*.

Dubler: Because language helps us distinguish among processes even when they are similar.

Rifkin: Haven't you introduced design by eliminating one gene? It seems to me you're not taking full responsibility for this. You're saying you are willing to design for some things but not others. It's not semantics. It's a question of whether you're willing to plan any part of the genetic makeup of your offspring in advance.

Murray: I'm willing to spare my offspring the horrors of a few terrible diseases.

Rifkin: It's interesting how we use language. Scientists used the term *genetic engineering* up until the late 1970s. When the controversy over genetics emerged, the word was changed from *engineering* to *therapy*. Suddenly we're talking about gene therapy. What's the difference between engineering and therapy?

Lapham: From this discussion it seems obvious. Therapy connotes taking away the negatives, and engineering connotes putting in the positives. The sentiment here is that it's OK to take away the negatives; that's therapy. It's not OK to put in the positives; that's engineering.

Murray: We're not talking about engineering; we are talking about eliminating a disease.

Rifkin: You're talking here about changing the blueprint of life itself.

Murray: When a physician cures a disease, is that engineering?

Rifkin: Yes, if the physician engineers changes into the genetic blueprint. When an engineer eliminates a defect in the design of a tool, that's engineering. Because you're going right to the heart of the actual technology that you've created. Remember, just because something can be done doesn't mean it inevitably should be done. Throughout history many more technologies have been rejected by various cultures than accepted. It's only in the last 200 years of the Western world view that we have come to believe that if it can be done, it's inevitable—a fait accompli. As if new technologies come here in some mysterious way, and we just stumble across them and therefore have to live with them as we do the changing seasons. That view allows us not to take responsibility. I don't assume that any of these things are a fait accompli.

Dubler: It's a wonderful moment: Jeremy and I agree. There is no technological imperative. That's exactly what I've been arguing. Simply because a technology exists is no reason that we must use it or that we can use it.

Rifkin: But what are you going to do? You have to have a change in world views to deal responsibly with this technology. You can't use this world view to critique this technology because this world view is the architect of this technology.

Dubler: I believe that scholarly discussion serves as the basis for public discussion and that is how our society should proceed. Ideas are addressed by scholars, which are then discussed by legislators, which then become the subject of articles in the public press. Eventually, but not without great difficulty, this debate will produce a consensus on what our overriding values should be. ♦

Hispan



Gilbert Sánchez Luján (1940-), born Stockton, California
"Hanging Out," 1986
Pastel on paper, 76 x 112 cm
Courtesy of Robert Berman Gallery, Santa Monica, California

i c ART IN AMERICA



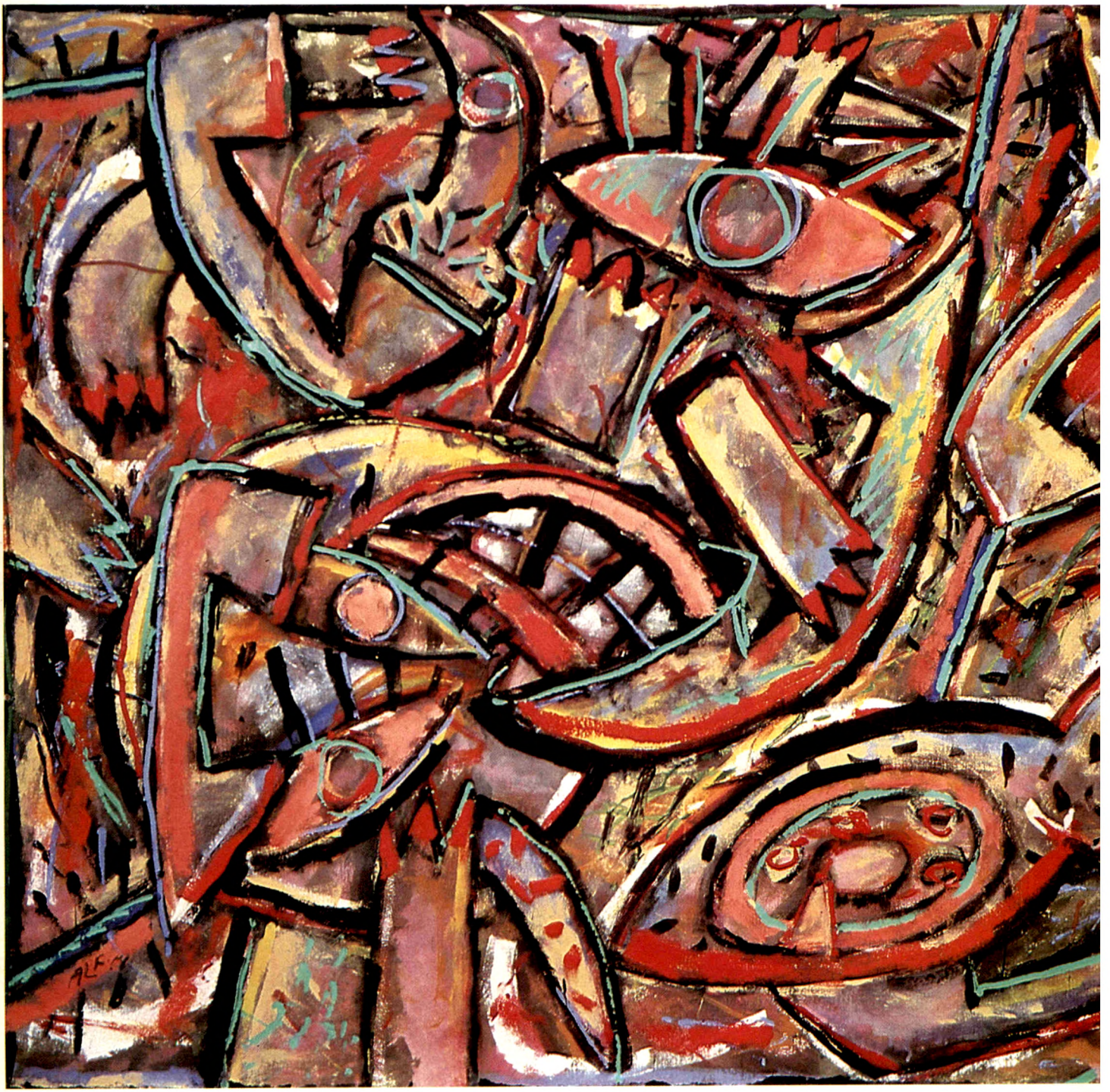
Americans of Hispanic origin constitute the second largest minority group in the United States, one that is growing at a faster rate than the population as a whole. As the 18 million Hispanic-Americans become more confident of their identity in U.S. society, their cultural consciousness is becoming stronger. While their numbers and their cultural diversity have increased as a result of recent immigration from several Latin American countries, there is still a sense of common heritage. This pride in shared Latin origins recently received major recognition with the first exhibition ever to survey the range of contemporary Hispanic art in the United States.

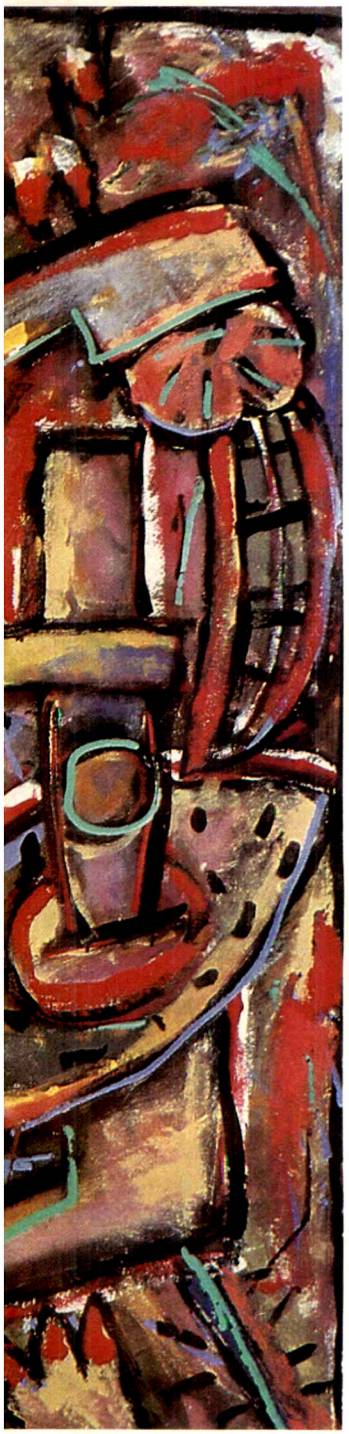
The exhibit, organized by Houston's Museum of Fine Arts and the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., demonstrates both the ethnic diversity of Hispanic-Americans and a certain cultural unity. Curators Jane Livingston and John Beardsley selected works by 30 painters and sculptors. Eleven of these artists were born in other countries—Mexico, Cuba, Chile, Colombia and Uruguay—and are now living in the United States. Like the Hispanic population in general, the majority of the artists are Mexican-American (often called "Chicano"), including Los Angeles painter Gilbert Sánchez Luján, whose "Hanging Out" is shown at left. Other works shown on the following pages suggest the rich variety of Hispanic-American communities. Some artists are urbanites whose large, colorful paintings filled with references to automobiles and other icons of popular culture reflect their beginnings as muralists in Los Angeles, New York or Chicago. Others depict rural settings: a farm family tending a cactus garden; a fisherman's boat and his catch. If there is a common bond among the artists, it is their passionate intensity: vibrant colors, furious activity, the evocation of life and death. John Beardsley calls this style "the kind of extravagance of color and manner we associate with *carnaval*," while *Newsweek* art critic Mark Stevens has described these artists as "devotees of the fantastic" who "seem to reach toward something beyond the ordinary."

What are the roots of this style? Hispanic-Americans are overwhelmingly Roman Catholic, and they feel a strong sense of community centered on their family and their *barrio* or neighborhood. Much of their art conveys an awareness of life lived as daily drama and many images seem charged with mystical emotion. Other roots derive from the mixture of Hispanic-American culture with elements from the local black, Indian and Anglo-Saxon populations. The resulting synthesis makes for unexpected connections: a piece of church statuary may resemble pop art, while a minimalistic sculpture calls to mind pre-Columbian Indian works.

This exhibition recognizes the arrival of the Spanish-speaking population as a cultural force in the United States. And the words of Mexican writer Octavio Paz describe both Hispanic-Americans and the artists among them: "Whatever they are, they are alive. Their culture is ancient, but they are new. They are a beginning."

Carlos Alfonzo (1950-), born Havana, Cuba
"On Hold in the Blue Line," 1984
Acrylic on canvas, 183 x 244 cm
Collection of Peter Menendez





Carlos Almaraz (1941-), born Mexico City
"Europe and the Jaguar," 1982
Oil on canvas, 183 x 183 cm
Courtesy of Locus Gallery, San Antonio, Texas



Patricia Gonzalez (1958-), born Cartagena, Colombia
"Heart Forest," 1985
Oil on paper, 91 x 91 cm
Private collection

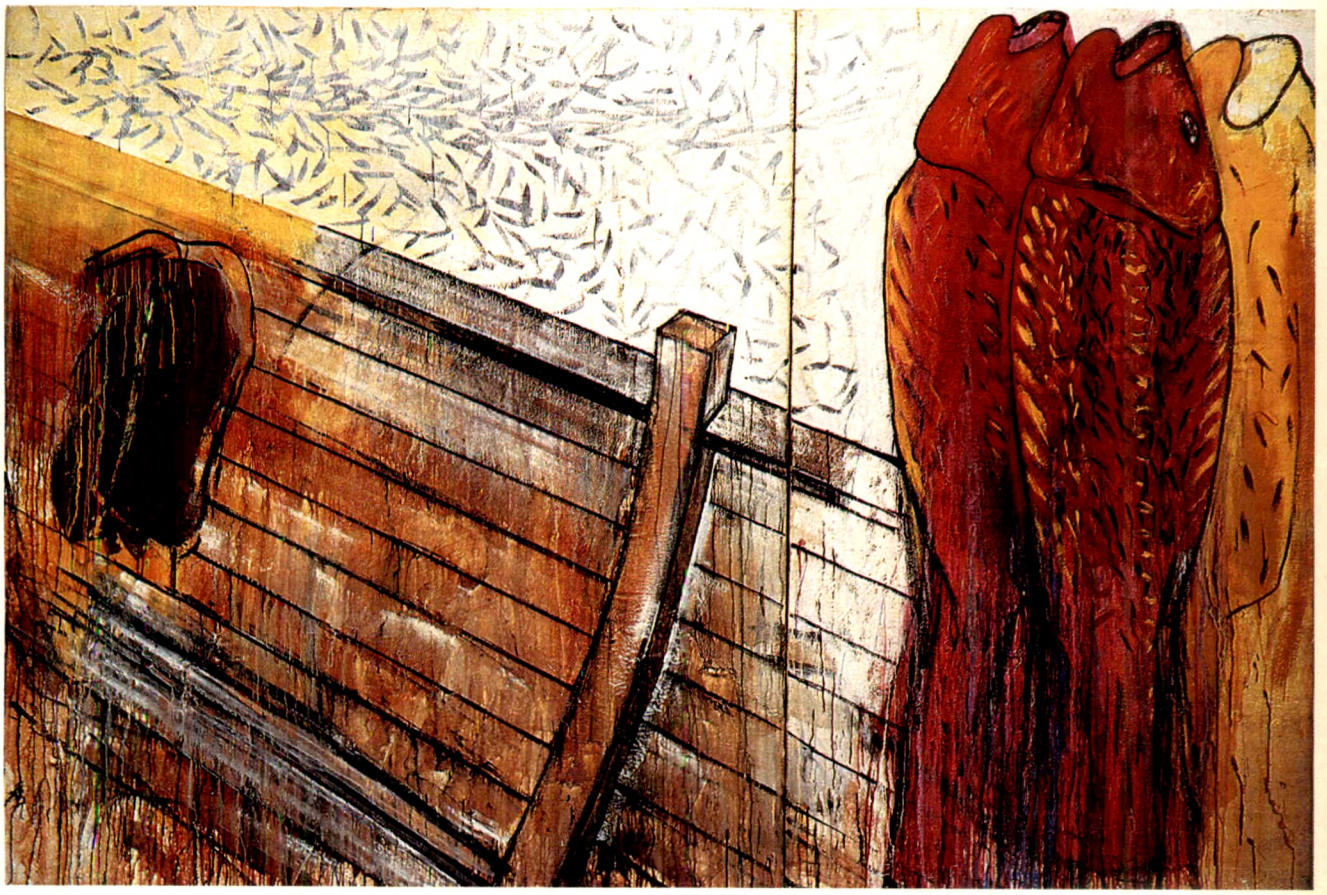
Robert Grove



Rolando Briseño (1952-), born San Antonio, Texas
"Discussion at the Table," 1984
Oil on wood and masonite, 231 x 277 cm
Courtesy of Artnetwork, Tucson, Arizona



Ismael Frigerio (1955-), born Santiago, Chile
"The First Opportunity of Pain," 1985
Tempera and acrylic on burlap, two panels, 173 x 310 cm overall
Collection of the artist





Robert Grove

Carmen Lomas Garza (1948-), born Kingsville, Texas
"Self-Portrait," 1980
Gouache on Arches paper, 22 x 19 cm
Collection of the artist

Frank Romero (1941-), born East Los Angeles, California
"Still Life with Red Car," 1986
Oil on canvas, 119 x 127 cm
Courtesy of the artist



Robert Grove

Gronk (1954-), born Los Angeles, California
"Cabin Fever," 1984
Acrylic on canvas, 183 x 241 cm
Courtesy of Daniel Boley



Robert Grove

Roberto Juarez (1952-), born Chicago, Illinois
"French Arrangement," 1985
Acrylic and oilstick on canvas, 149 x 199 cm
Courtesy of Elizabeth and William Landes, Chicago



Lidya Buzio (1948-), born Montevideo, Uruguay
"Dark Blue Roofscape," 1986
Earthenware, 35 cm
Collection of Betty Asher



Ivan Dalla Tana

REVIEWS

FICTION

Return to Realism

THE BONFIRE OF THE VANITIES. By Tom Wolfe. *Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 659 pp.*

Reviewed by Richard Vigilante

Once—and as far as I can tell, only once—Tom Wolfe got reckless. In 1973, in a 52-page essay introducing a collection of the best of the New Journalism, the veil slipped for an instant, and the high priest of vanity-of-vanities journalism, who has made a small fortune demonstrating the entertainment value of other people's hubris, revealed the truth to the entire world: he takes himself seriously.

He and the other writers whose work was collected in that volume weren't just journalists, according to Wolfe, and what they were doing wasn't just journalism, not even New Journalism. No, they were—the new literature.

The old literature had flubbed it. The novelists, in a fit of self-absorption, had ignored the essential truth of the social-realist novel from Fielding to Joyce, that the novelist is first and foremost not a creator but an observer, not a mystic but a journalist, dependent on his ability to engage, no matter how critically, his society. After World War II the realist novel had been abandoned, Wolfe argued, for "every kind of novel you could imagine....Novels of ideas, Freudian novels, surrealistic novels, Kafkaesque novels, and more recently the catatonic novel or novel of immobility."

Not even the magnificent farce of the 1960s could lure the serious novelists back to reality. But never fear. Tom Wolfe and his friends were taking up the slack, inventing a new kind of journalism that, using all the essential techniques of the realistic novel—scenario, point of view, dialogue—would "wipe out the novel as literature's main event."

As Wolfe wrote: "The early days of this new journalism were beginning to look like...the early days of the realistic novel in England." He confessed to "grand ideas about a new journalism....Journalism could aspire to more than mere emulation of those aging giants, the novelists." Using the techniques of the New Journalism, "the writer is one step closer to the absolute involvement of the reader that Henry James and James Joyce dreamed of and never achieved."

Tom Wolfe, we discover, is sincere, a do-gooder, a man with a program. All this time, while we thought that he was writing vividly entertaining profiles of racing drivers and surfers and the Girl of the Year, Tom Wolfe was *saving American literature*. Moreover, the 1973 anthology is a powerful reminder that Wolfe was right. With very few exceptions all 21 writers collected succeed in using journalism as the basis for nonfiction novels and short stories far more intelligent, perceptive, challenging and emotionally powerful than the work of all but a handful of contemporary novelists.

In 1984 the prophet of the New Journalism announced he was writing a novel. Serialized in *Rolling Stone* magazine over the course of a year, it has just been released in hardback, after a heavy and not always well-advised rewrite. Is this a defeat for Wolfe? An admission that novels are



Journalist and novelist Tom Wolfe.

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Richard Vigilante is a contributor to and former editor with National Review.

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still where the action is?

No and yes. It is a good novel, but it is also of a piece with his earlier work—his earlier *campaign*—and it further secures Wolfe's place as the most important writer of his generation. He is still saving American literature, and largely for that reason he has written a novel whose flaws are even more fascinating than its successes.

The story is a nightmare set in Manhattan, the great temptress, the status pinnacle of the late 20th century, the only city in our time capable of reassuring the adult-children of the modern world that they really and truly exist, at least as long as they are there and are living...The Life. Sherman McCoy lives The Life. He is a top bond trader, pulls down a million dollars a year, and after a big deal whispers to himself that he is a Master of the Universe. But there are problems. For one thing you can't really live The Life in Manhattan on a measly million a year. For another thing, you're a bond trader—a salesman, for goodness' sake. No wonder your wife finds it so easy to emasculate you with her bogus artsy-lefty cultural superiority. And she's getting old. Shouldn't a Master of the Universe have more? More money, a younger woman. Of course McCoy answers yes, and of course he is destroyed, or perhaps purified, in the attempt.

All the many supporting characters are in the same game, including an assistant district attorney who has an affair because he feels unmanned by his very small apartment. The characters are mostly terrific, and the plot is compelling. No one has portrayed New York society this accurately and devastatingly since Edith Wharton. In short, Wolfe's first novel has all the virtues you would expect.

As for those interesting defects, true to Wolfe's 1973 manifesto, this really is an experiment in radically journalistic fiction. Wolfe's authorship itself implies a claim that all this has been observed rather than created. The narrator powerfully, and I assume deliberately, reinforces that impression, through constant digressions on the New York scene, from the protocols of Wall Street power, to the etiquette of the furious status competitions of Park Avenue, to the locker-room ethics of the criminal-justice system. All this stuff is entertaining, splendidly written and acutely observed. Unfortunately, against the background of this constant, if enormously entertaining, sociology lecture the characters sometimes seem a bit like audio-visual aids—trotted out to verify the thesis.

There is a more fundamental problem. In that 1973 essay, Wolfe made the crucial claim that the New Journalism might become more emotionally powerful than the realistic novel, not because of its claim to be true—the novel makes the same claim—but because of its claim to be factual. "It enjoys an advantage so obvious, so built in, one almost forgets what a power it has: the simple fact that the reader knows all this actually happened." In Wolfe at his nonfiction best, this power, always just beneath the surface, burst forth in a few dazzling epiphanies in the course of a piece. Though the epiphanies function as symbols, their power relies on the claim that they are facts.

In his novel Wolfe sacrifices this factual power by mostly dropping the epiphanies while maintaining an essentially reportorial approach to his descriptions of scene and society. The net result—by Wolfe's usual standards, anyway—is a bit flat, like old journalism.

So is the experiment a success? Well, let us say that Wolfe is a success, if we are to grade him by his secret do-gooder agenda. With *Bonfire*, Wolfe the literary politician has made an enormous contribution toward breaking the death-grip of the self-absorbed literati on the serious novel. He has demonstrated that the tedium of three decades' worth of serious fiction derives not from its seriousness but from its solipsism. And he has done this with a best seller, which is to say he has recruited lots of potential defectors.

Largely because of Wolfe's efforts, it is finally safe to predict that the social-realist novel will soon reemerge as an accepted and perhaps dominant force on the serious-fiction scene. ♦

POLITICAL ECONOMY

The Great Trespasser

RIVAL VIEWS OF MARKET SOCIETY AND OTHER RECENT ESSAYS. By Albert O. Hirschman. *Viking/Elisabeth Sifton Books. 197 pp.*

Reviewed by Robert Kuttner

Albert Hirschman is one of those remarkable scholars occasionally mistaken for more than one person. There is Hirschman the political theorist, the historian of ideas, the institutionalist, the practitioner of European reconstruction and Third World development, the adviser to foreign governments.

But this is hardly a man who flits among fields. There is a splendid coherence to his work, despite the fact that Hirschman is impossible to pigeonhole ideologically or methodologically, despite the range of his curiosity. Hirschman has legions of far-flung admirers; his intellectual influence turns up in unlikely places. Professor emeritus at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey, he is among the most distinguished and readable social theorists. Yet he is not quite among the group of intellectuals whose names are household words, even in well-read homes. Though he is first and foremost an economist, curious about problems that are fundamentally economic and well grounded both in the classics of that discipline and in applied research, his work is most highly prized today by political scientists and sociologists, by students of international organization and by empiricists at the relative fringes of today's formalistic economics profession.

For readers only dimly familiar

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with Hirschman's oeuvre, his latest collection, *Rival Views of Market Society*, is a fine sampler. More than a sampler: it is a kind of reprise, a recapitulation that includes variations on earlier themes, reconsiderations and embellishment of familiar leitmotivs, with both echoes and charming reversals. At 72, Hirschman puckishly first proposed calling the collection *Final Essays, Volume One*.

Hirschman writes English as gracefully as any economist—that is probably faint praise—though English was the third or fourth language he learned. The title essay of the collection [see abridgment in *Review* 4/87] was actually first written in French. In it Hirschman wrestles with the great question of political economy: the uneasy relationship between market and society. Is capitalism fundamentally a civilizing and socializing influence, engendering trust, civility and social order, as Enlightenment economists predicted? Or are market forces mainly disruptive of the social cohesion that civic life demands?

Hirschman is relentless in his challenge to the narrowness of standard modern economic theory. Here his masterwork is *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*, and it is refined in another chapter of the new collection. There are two faces of human freedom, Hirschman argues. One is "Exit"—the right to shop for better products, or a better job, or a more suitable mate, or even a different nationality. The other is "Voice"—the right to stay put and exercise influence. Political science, which holds that voting is the essential avenue of influence, emphasizes Voice. Market economics places all its eggs—mistakenly, in Hirschman's view—in the Exit basket. Poorly run enterprises are expected to fall by the wayside and be replaced by more efficient ones. Unattractive shops will lose customers. But, writes Hirschman, "Exit is a powerful but indirect and somewhat blunt way of alerting management to its failings....Exit does not provide management with much information on what is or has gone wrong."

The obsession of standard economics with Exit as the rational response of homo economicus, to the exclusion of a more social conception of man, leads economists to absurd reductionisms. For example, Gary Becker of the University of Chicago proposes a cost-benefit calculus of children as economic goods, and the trendy "public-choice" school sees collaborative social arrangements as merely illicit transgressions of the market. What sociologists take to be necessary cohesion, modern economists are trained to suspect as collusion.

In his wonderful essay "Against Parsimony," Hirschman writes: "Economists often propose to deal with unethical or antisocial behavior by raising the cost of that behavior rather than by proclaiming standards....They think of citizens [only] as consumers....This view tends to neglect the possibility that people are capable of changing their values." Laws, argues Hirschman, are often superior to such contrivances as anti-pollution "effluent charges," because they can signal and reinforce "a general change in the civic climate," rather than impose a mere utilitarian calculus. The standard economic view, of man optimizing choices in a social vacuum, offers "too simple-minded an account of even such fundamental economic processes as consumption and production," let alone an adequate conception of human psychology and organization.

Hirschman, who was born in Berlin and fled Nazi Germany, belongs to a unique generation. He epitomizes what sociologist Lewis Coser called the "refugee-scholar," one of a distinguished group of cosmopolitan, well-educated European humanists, deepened by their escape from fascism, who went on to pursue eminent careers either in America or in new roles in the postwar reconstruction of Europe. Their horror at organized barbarism tempered their theorizing with modesty. They represent a kind of modern philosophe rapidly vanishing from the scholarly scene. Moreover, refugee scholars like Hirschman arrived in the United States at a moment when the American academy was feeling sufficiently expansive to admit people who were brilliant "trespassers" (a favorite Hirschman self-description) across disciplinary conventions. Academia today is far more insecure, discipline-bound and intellectually pinched.

After taking a job in the United States, with the wartime Federal Reserve and later working on the Marshall Plan, Hirschman struck out in a new direction, taking a post in 1952 as adviser to the Colombian planning ministry. Practice, as always, enriched theory. In a much-quoted observation, he noted that the sociology of successful economic development truly involves the "calling forth and enlisting for development purposes resources that are scattered, hidden or badly utilized." With his deep respect for the complex, the concrete and the local, Hirschman championed the imperative that Latin Americans find their own, pragmatic way.

Returning to America in 1956, Hirschman wrote several works about development, and soon went back to his lifelong theme, market and society, launching another career as master theorist and trespasser. In *Rival Views*, he credits his practical investigation of economic development with germinating the concepts that matured in 1970 as *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*, a book whose title was typically Hirschman—a seemingly eccentric mixing of entirely dissimilar things, but in fact a novel synthesis. The book places him among a small group of mid-20th-century social scientists—Karl Polanyi, Joseph Schumpeter, Fred Hirsch, Herbert Simon, Charles E. Lindblom come to mind—for whom "trespassing" (and integrating) is the whole point. Hirschman's intellectual switchbacks are never tedious to traverse, rarely contentious or arcane, and invariably spirited and plain fun.

Hirschman's style of inquiry is at once empirical, institutional, concrete, yet informed by wide knowledge of the classics. It is disdainful of artificial boundaries, yet self-restrained in its own grand claims. One finds this elsewhere in the social sciences, but rarely in economics. In this respect, Hirschman-style trespassing is the opposite of the imperialism of neoclassical economics, which paints by the numbers, is anti-institutional, and trespasses into the other social sciences seeking to impose smug formulas that are supposed to cover all

cases. Standard economics is grandiose where modesty would be appropriate, yet professes methodological helplessness where a little boldness might be indicated.

Hirschman himself would probably be a little kinder to the neoclassical tradition in economics. His own style is to explore and persuade, not to excoriate. What he cannot condone is the modern economics profession's self-imposed insularity. All the complications ignored by standard economics, writes Hirschman, "flow from a single source—the incredible complexity of human nature, which was disregarded by traditional theory for very good reason, but which must be spoon-fed back into the traditional findings for the sake of greater realism."

Like Hirschman, one must have a bias for hope, and trust that human curiosity about ideas and institutions will eventually break the sterile disciplinary shackles. So one eagerly awaits Hirschman's *Final Essays*—volumes two, three and many more. There could be no better guide toward a revived discipline of institutional political economy. ♦

MUSIC

A Life in Music

GERSHWIN. By Edward Jablonski. *Doubleday. 436 pp.*

Reviewed by William H. Youngren

It is probably fair to say that George Gershwin (1898-1937) was the most famous American musical figure of his brief time. He died before reaching his 39th birthday, and did not achieve celebrity until 1924, with the premiere of *Rhapsody in Blue*—though the date could perhaps be pushed back to 1922, when bandleader Paul Whiteman recorded "I'll Build a Stairway to Paradise," or even to 1920, when Al Jolson recorded "Swanee." In any case, it was only for about 15 years that Gershwin was before the public. Yet at the time of his death, probably 50 to 100 of his songs, his handful of concert works and portions of his opera *Porgy and Bess* were known throughout the world, and he was widely regarded as the United States' most important and representative 20th-century composer.



Composer George Gershwin.

Ira Gershwin

But until now there has been no biography that did him justice. In Edward Jablonski, Gershwin has at last found the biographer he has so long needed and deserved. Unless some startling new information comes to light, it is hard to see why Gershwin will ever need another biography.

Some reviewers have expressed disappointment that Jablonski did not attempt to delve more deeply into Gershwin's psyche, to ferret out the causes of the tremendous drive that produced all that wonderful music in those few years. It seems to me, however, that Jablonski's steadfast refusal to put his subject on the couch, and to speculate about sources, motives and causes beyond what the written and spoken warrants, is one of the great strengths of his book. It is a great relief to have this book on Gershwin that simply weaves together the external facts of his extraordinary career with the testimony of so many people who knew and worked with him.

Despite Gershwin's enormous popular success—or, rather, because of the peculiar nature of that success—his career and reputation were under something of a cloud during most of his creative life, and even after his death. Americans love to think of themselves as free and adventurous, experimental, not bound by the rigid categories of the Old World. And nowhere is this more true than in the arts. Yet it was precisely the apparent ease with which Gershwin moved back and forth between the musical theater and the concert stage, from popular songs to extended concert works and finally into opera, that troubled and annoyed his contemporaries—and especially his American, as opposed to his European, contemporaries.

The trouble began in 1924 with the premiere of *Rhapsody in Blue*. Accustomed as he was to the ways of the musical theater, and being relatively inexperienced at orchestration, Gershwin left the job of scoring the *Rhapsody* to Ferde Grofé, who was then Whiteman's chief arranger. This now seems a small matter, hardly worth mentioning, but then it seemed very important indeed.

So long as Gershwin confined himself to writing songs and the scores for musical shows, he could be safely ignored by the American musical establishment. But the instantly and immensely successful *Rhapsody* was something else again. For the leaders of that establishment had it all planned out that America would find its authentic musical voice in the works of composers like themselves, who came of Anglo-Saxon stock, had attended elite colleges and had gone on to conservatory training under European masters. To them, Gershwin's successful bid for recognition as a serious composer was not only an affront but also a threat. There had to be some way of proving that a Jewish song-plugger from New York's Lower East Side who had come up through

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the ranks of the popular-music industry on Tin Pan Alley with little or no formal training was a fraud. Thus the fact that the musically more respectable Grofé had orchestrated *Rhapsody in Blue* was eagerly seized upon as evidence that he had probably had a hand in its composition as well.

Gershwin, who had a sizable ego, was understandably stung by these rumors. He therefore resolved that from then on he would orchestrate all his concert works himself.

Throughout most of his career, then, Gershwin was damned if he did and damned if he didn't. Either he was a musical illiterate who had blundered alone into the world of serious music or—more likely, considering his success and his ethnic background—he craftily got others to do his work for him. That it was perfectly possible for so gifted a man to cross the line from Broadway to Carnegie Hall was, to many of his most influential contemporaries, simply inconceivable.

But of course the plain truth, as Jablonski clearly shows, is that Gershwin did it on his own. Not only is there the testimony of his friends and of his sketches and manuscript scores, now in the U.S. Library of Congress; there is also the fact that no other explanation makes any psychological sense. Gershwin was not only a fiercely ambitious man but a very proud one as well, sure from an early age of the magnitude of his gift. Surely he would no more have compromised his sense of himself by depending unduly upon others than he would have run the risk of having the dependency somehow come to light.

In the meantime Gershwin had served his Tin Pan Alley apprenticeship and begun the collaboration with his lyricist brother Ira (1896-1983). By the mid-1920s the two Gershwins were turning out show scores at the rate of one or two a year for the likes of Fred and Adele Astaire (*Lady Be Good!*, *Funny Face*) and Gertrude Lawrence (*Oh, Kay!*, *Treasure Girl*). In the same month that the *Concerto in F* was premiered at Carnegie Hall, December 1925, two Gershwin shows opened on Broadway.

But Gershwin kept reading and studying on his own, and attending concerts and recitals. Moreover, as Jablonski shows, once Gershwin had made his name as a theatrical composer, he again felt free to attempt serious directed study. In 1926 he composed only one show score and spent "several months searching for a suitable teacher." During 1927 he met, at first weekly and then monthly, with the composer Henry Cowell. Early in 1928, when he was beginning work on *An American in Paris*, he had something of a breathing space. Gershwin approached Maurice Ravel, who was on a tour of the United States and had asked to meet him, and later, in Paris, Nadia Boulanger. Both of them turned him down, for reasons that are not now clear.

Of course there was much more to George Gershwin's life than work, and there is much more in Jablonski's book than an account of his studies and achievements. The constant parties, at which he often played the piano until well past dawn, are vividly remembered, and his relations with the various glamorous women whom he courted are for once put in perspective.

Throughout, Jablonski's attitude toward his subject, both as man and as artist, is just as a biographer's should be: sympathetic yet alertly critical. On balance, Gershwin was pretty much what he appeared to be: an enormously gifted, energetic, fun-loving, attractive man. His constant bouts with the disease he wryly dubbed "composer's stomach" were due not to some dark and deep-seated neurosis but simply to the pressure of the deadlines that he kept setting for himself in order to see how far his talents would carry him. As Jablonski's extensive and valuable coverage of the musical shows makes clear, Gershwin was an efficient and accommodating collaborator who was always willing to submit to cuts and other changes in order to get the show on the road, even when it came to cutting about a quarter of his "labor of love," *Porgy and Bess*, for its first production—a tactical error that may well have been responsible for the work's initial critical and box-office failure.

Perhaps the best summary of his character comes from DuBose Heyward, author of the novel *Porgy* and coauthor (with Ira) of the libretto for *Porgy and Bess*: "A young man of enormous physical and emotional vitality, who possessed the faculty of seeing himself quite impersonally and realistically, and who knew exactly what he wanted and where he was going. This characteristic put him beyond both modesty and conceit." ♦

BIOLOGY

A Universe Without Design

THE BLIND WATCHMAKER. By Richard Dawkins. *W.W. Norton & Co. 332 pp.*

Reviewed by Michael Levin

You're not supposed to be able to tell a book by its cover, but its cover tells you a lot about Richard Dawkins's *The Blind Watchmaker*. It shows an Earth opening up like a pocket watch, with watchworks inside. The subtitle reads: *Why the Evidence of Evolution Reveals a Universe Without Design*. The reader knows at once that he is in the presence of imagination, precision, terseness and immense intellectual power.

Dawkins is an evolutionary biologist whose first book, *The Selfish Gene*, did much to legitimate the view that human behavior is to an important extent the innate product of evolutionary forces. In this book he is out to explain how Darwinism answers the greatest of all questions, "the ultimate explanations of why we exist," without appealing to an intelligent creator. According to evolutionary theory, we are the net result of small, un-

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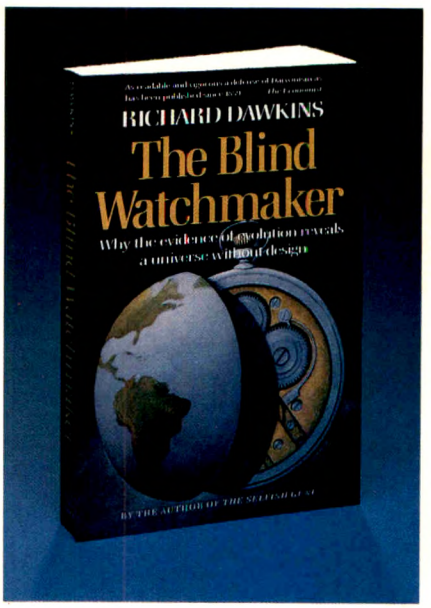
planned but adaptive changes that have accumulated over eons of time. Mutation proposes, environment selectively disposes, and we are the filtrate. Not only is God an explanatory fifth wheel, Dawkins argues, but God's existence itself would have to be explained by natural selection. Anything capable of planning evolution would have to be very complex, and the only noncircular explanation of complexity that there can be is the slow accumulation of relatively simple changes.

Dawkins's argument is more familiar to philosophers than he realizes (it was known in outline to Hume in the 18th century), but his suggestion that Darwinism is big news is still well taken. Darwin's theory of evolution has simply not been around long enough—it appeared in 1859—for the human race to absorb it. Its logic and implications have not even begun to sink in.

Chief among these implications is Darwinism's treatment of the observable features of the world that have most shaped mankind's religious consciousness. Why has belief in a deity been so deep and so widespread? Almost everyone, including the skeptic, has marveled at the ordered complexity of living nature. At first glance, and many glances thereafter, it seems unthinkable that the same blind forces that produce mountains and thunderstorms could have produced insect camouflage or bat radar or the hawk's eye. Such phenomena seem to require reference to a conscious purpose. The French savant Antoine-Vincent Arnauld called the human body "a machine so perfect only God could have made it." In the famous analogy from which Dawkins adapted his title, English theologian and philosopher William Paley compared the world to a watch and argued that it can reasonably be supposed to be the product only of something like a watchmaker.

The logical soft spot in Paley's analogy is the possibility of an unobvious power or "principle of order" within matter itself capable of producing eyes and bat echolocation as well as mountains. Before Darwin, however, this idea was too nebulous to be taken seriously. Paley was merely expressing pre-Darwinian common sense when he declared: "[No man] can even form to himself an idea of what is meant by a principle of order, distinct from the intelligence of the watchmaker." The great achievement of Darwin and his followers, chiefly statistical geneticists and molecular biologists, was to articulate such a principle and document its actual operation in nature.

Dawkins's own achievement is to make the conceptual core of these discoveries overwhelming to the rational mind. With unfailing inventiveness, Dawkins explains tricky ideas like complexity, improbability and randomness, and shows how simple processes can indeed generate "prodigies of apparent miracle." The key is that each step in the process be very small. It is true enough, as critics of Darwin are forever observing, that a fully developed eye could not have sprung in a single step from totally blind organisms. It is then suggested that one percent of an eye—a slight sensitivity to light—would be adaptively useless. Dawkins replies that one percent of an eye—a slightly photosensitive patch on an organism's surface—would indeed enable its possessor to find food and evade predators just a little bit more efficiently than its blind rivals. (As Dawkins points out, astigmatics who lose their eyeglasses are still better off than the totally blind.) Genes that encode a recipe for a light-sensitive patch would be more apt to reproduce until genes with a recipe for a slightly more sensitive patch came along. Given small enough steps and sufficient time, there is a path from light-insensitive viruses to the hawk.



The universe as an elegant machine.

Robert A. Grove

While Dawkins scorns Creationism (although he does its followers the courtesy of attempting to meet their arguments), he is almost as impatient with the much-publicized "punctuated equilibrium" school founded by Niles Eldredge of the American Museum of Natural History in New York and Harvard paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould [see *Review* 4/87]. Punctuationists maintain that evolution does not proceed at a uniform speed, but undergoes relatively fast and slow periods. In a chapter entitled "Puncturing Punctuationism," Dawkins shows this criticism to oppose only a caricature of Darwinism. He compares punctuationists' discovery to the discovery that, in taking 40 years to cross the 320 kilometers of the Sinai desert, the Israelites did not travel precisely 22 meters each and every day. Once it is granted that evolution is piecewise and unplanned, punctuationism becomes a "minor wrinkle" blown out of proportion by the media. ("It is as if the discovery that the Earth is not a perfect sphere but a slightly flattened spheroid were given banner treatment under the headline: COPERNICUS WRONG. FLAT EARTH THEORY VINDICATED.")

Apart from a vague reference to "those who have no reason to deny that evolution has happened but who, often for political or ideological reasons, find Darwin's theory of its *mechanism* distasteful," Dawkins tiptoes around the question of why reputable biologists would publicly exaggerate supposed deficiencies of Darwinism. The interesting point is that Darwinism sits no more easily with the secular Left than it does with the religious Right. No pre-Darwinian conception of man and

society is likely to survive. From a rigorously Darwinian perspective, human morality is neither like the command of God nor a human convention, but rather is the product of biology. It also appears that natural selection has endowed mankind with a cluster of instinctual drives that limit what manipulation of the social environment can accomplish in the way of changing human behavior. These drives may no longer be adaptive or attractive, but they are not going to be altered in anything but geological time, and we had better get used to that.

Dawkins obviously sees all this; he makes the reader see it too. The deep feeling that Dawkins communicates for natural selection should hasten mankind's reckoning with the Darwinian world view. ♦

HISTORY

Back to Politics

THE NEW HISTORY AND THE OLD: CRITICAL ESSAYS AND REAPPRAISALS. By Gertrude Himmelfarb. *Harvard University Press. 209 pp.*

Reviewed by Merle Rubin

What is the so-called new history? Under this rubric we find a variety of approaches, some diametrically opposed to others: social, economic, demographic and cliometric history; populist, feminist, black and Marxist history.

In *The New History and the Old*, historian Gertrude Himmelfarb of the City University of New York is chiefly concerned with two basic trends: psychohistory (and all theoretical approaches that substitute the esoteric "knowledge" of self-validating formulas for hard evidence) and quantohistory (which relies on statistics and other "hard" quantifications as substitutes for ideas).

Himmelfarb finds it ironic that historians should flock to apply social-science methods to a humanities field, particularly at a time when many social scientists are seriously questioning the validity and value of their own methods. A similar phenomenon, however, has occurred in literary studies where Marxism, for example, has been eagerly taken up by some English professors who know little of politics and less of literature.

The new history, as Himmelfarb concedes, arose to fill a real need that even old-fashioned historians sensed. In 1944 in his famous book *English Social History*, G.M. Trevelyan offered readers "the history of a people with the politics left out." At the time, it was a worthy attempt to redress the balance in a field that had previously favored political, military and diplomatic history. Instead of chronicling the deeds of kings, generals, presidents and governments, social historians examined the daily life of ordinary people. Studies proliferated of specific groups (factory workers, women, slaves, artisans), specific places (a French village, a New England mill town) or specific institutions (prisons, workhouses, hospitals, schools, asylums).

The essays in this book, all but one previously published in the years 1975 to 1986, attack the new history on a variety of fronts. The British Marxist historians are attacked for having failed to scrutinize their own Marxism (unlike the French, who have done so). A French historian is attacked for his technique of *pointillisme*, which substitutes a mosaic of incidents for the traditional cause-and-effect narrative. And there is little to be gained, Himmelfarb argues, from an "in-depth" microstudy of a colonial American town if such a history contains no reference to the great political issues that were shaping the birth of the American republic.

Above all, Himmelfarb fears that the death (or at least the dearth) of old-style political history may lead to a death (or dearth) of political values. Man, she reminds us, quoting Aristotle, is a political animal, although the saying is often misquoted to read that man is a social animal. (Himmelfarb disdains *social* as a term equally applicable to bees and ants.) *Politics*, she feels, is not a dirty word: it deals not only with means (as in "power politics") but also with envisioned ends (such as "political justice").



Historian Gertrude Himmelfarb.

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Political life involves the exercise of reason and free will. Too often, she believes, "new" historians ignore traditional texts, such as speeches, legislative debates, pamphlets and essays, in favor of "spontaneous," unrehearsed material, such as diaries, letters and shopping lists. Here, quantohistory shares with psychohistory a belief that what is inadvertently revealed is more significant than what is deliberately said. Himmelfarb asks if it is wise to dismiss the conscious, rational efforts of statesmen and thinkers to formulate ideas about government, ideas that ordinary citizens may well have pondered and discussed as they went about those daily lives that so fascinate social historians.

Himmelfarb repeatedly claims she has no objection to the new history as such, only to its "hegemony." In her 1984 essay, "History with the Politics Left Out" (the only one in this book she chose to leave unrevised, in the form that provoked a spate of critical responses), Himmelfarb gives evidence of how the new history has not

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only come to prevail in universities, but has even filtered down to the level of secondary schools.

Despite her disclaimers, one cannot help suspecting that Himmelfarb's disapproval of the "hegemony" of the new history also includes a more basic distaste for social history as such. The author of *Victorian Minds*, *Marriage and Morals among the Victorians* and other works notable for the respect they show for the spirit of that age, Himmelfarb derides the folly of a history that purports to be "scientific" and "value free."

She openly declares her allegiance to the Victorian "moral imagination." She is much in sympathy with Carlyle's prescient remarks on statistics, which she quotes at length: "Tables are like cobwebs, like the sieve of the Danaides; beautifully reticulated, orderly to look upon, but which will hold no conclusion....Conclusive facts are inseparable from inconclusive except by a head that already understands and knows."

She also includes a touching story about the immensely popular historian Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859), whose history of England became a best seller: a gentlemen invited his poorer neighbors to his home every evening to read aloud to them from Macaulay. At the conclusion one of the listeners "rose and moved a vote of thanks to the author 'for having written a history which working men can understand.' "

In a democracy, it is especially vital that history "speak" to as many citizens as possible. Although Himmelfarb's sympathies are centrist-conservative—"progressive" rather than "utopian," as she puts it—her belief in the importance of politics can be instructive to all stripes of opinion. History with a political story to tell can be the most valuable kind, because, as she argues, it reveals our stake in the past and informs present choices with an understanding of tradition.

Written in a clear, direct style, free of jargon, these essays are emphatic, polemical, cogently argumentative and very close to the kind of discourse that Himmelfarb finds lacking in the discipline of history as practiced today. ♦

LITERATURE

Native Ground

COLUMBIA LITERARY HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES. Edited by Emory Elliott. *Columbia University Press. 1384 pp.*

Reviewed by Anthony Burgess

The question must be asked, What do we mean by a national literature? It is easily answered in respect of countries like, say, Albania, whose language is coextensive with history and territory; it is not so easily answered as regards Italy and Greece, where historical continuity is denied by the change from a classical language to a modern one and where the very concept of nation is of fairly recent manufacture. With America, limits have to be artificially imposed. This colossal survey has found room for the Amerindian languages, and for Hispanic writers, Asiatic immigrants and Jews like Isaac Bashevis Singer, who have clung to Yiddish. But the major problem is finding a dividing line between the literature of a colonial people and that of an emancipated one, and dealing with that modern reversal whereby Henry James and T.S. Eliot ceased to be American and became British, while Christopher Isherwood and W.H. Auden—not notably dealt with in this book—abandoned England and became, respectively, a Californian and a New Yorker.

It is probably not enough to limit the literature of the United States to what has been written in English on American soil below the Great Lakes and the 49th parallel. It is better, and more in keeping with the patriotic tendency that wants to chart a national literature, to look for a definable American quality, though being prepared to see it shade off into recidivistic Britishry or expand into internationalism. We have no trouble with Mark Twain and Walt Whitman, who are as American as that British invention the apple pie, but James is a great nuisance and so, notoriously, is Ezra Pound, whose Americanism is defined through treason.

Though Mistress Anne Bradstreet was born in Northampton, England, and was already 18 when she sailed to Massachusetts, her adult poetry is undeniably American, in that it was written within the sound of Indian war whoops and chuckling turkeys. It is also colonial, in that it is far from any heart of literary culture that could refine it. Addressing her own book of poems, she wrote:

> *In this array 'mongst vulgars*
> *may'st thou roam.*
> *In critic's hands beware thou*
> *dost not come,*
> *If for thy father asked, say thou*
> *hadst none;*
> *And for thy mother, she alas is*
> *poor,*
> *Which caused her thus to send*
> *thee out of door.*

This is provincial verse, or doggerel, but that does not matter so long as it is American. The homage due to Bradstreet, and duly paid three centuries later by another American poet, John Berryman, has little to do with literary merit.

America needed primitivism, the sense of a stumbling amateur striving toward a hard-won perfection and not quite reaching it. The rejected society of Great Britain was not in accord with a beleaguered Puritan society trying to build a new nation from scratch. And yet when that new nation achieved independence, was not the voice of its prose style very much that of Augustan deist London? Has there ever been finer English, but altogether Amer-

British author Anthony Burgess has published over 50 works of fiction, biography, criticism, poetry and music. His most recent book is Little Wilson and Big God: Being the First Part of the Autobiography.

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ican, prose than this, from the Declaration of Independence?

> When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

The chauvinistic desire to believe in the existence of an American language, altogether sundered from the mother tongue, impelled the Teuton H.L. Mencken to proclaim a kind of linguistic independence, stressing divergence and wishing to deny uniformity. The truth is that British and American English are virtually the same, that the differences in syntax and usage are minimal and that mutual understanding of literary texts is total. Speech is a different matter, and it was only when American literature shed its formality and admitted the colloquial that it was possible to speak of a new, homegrown tradition. It had to begin humorously, even though with Mark Twain the humor was to be enclosed in a complex view of the comic.

It may be said that with the coming of Mark Twain and Walt Whitman it became impossible for an Englishman to write like an American, though an American had no reciprocal problem. A colonial literature encloses that of the mother country. With Whitman it was a matter of subject; with Twain it was a question of vision, scene, idiom, ethos—the literary totality.

So I, British-born, though in European exile and once an adoptive New Yorker, look at a literature that has modified my sensibility quite as much as that of my native country—in some ways more so, since I consider myself a kind of rebel against the British establishment. This literature is surveyed in the *Columbia Literary History* at such length, and with such skill, that it defeats the reviewer's duty to seek faults and impels him to a praise only partially qualified.

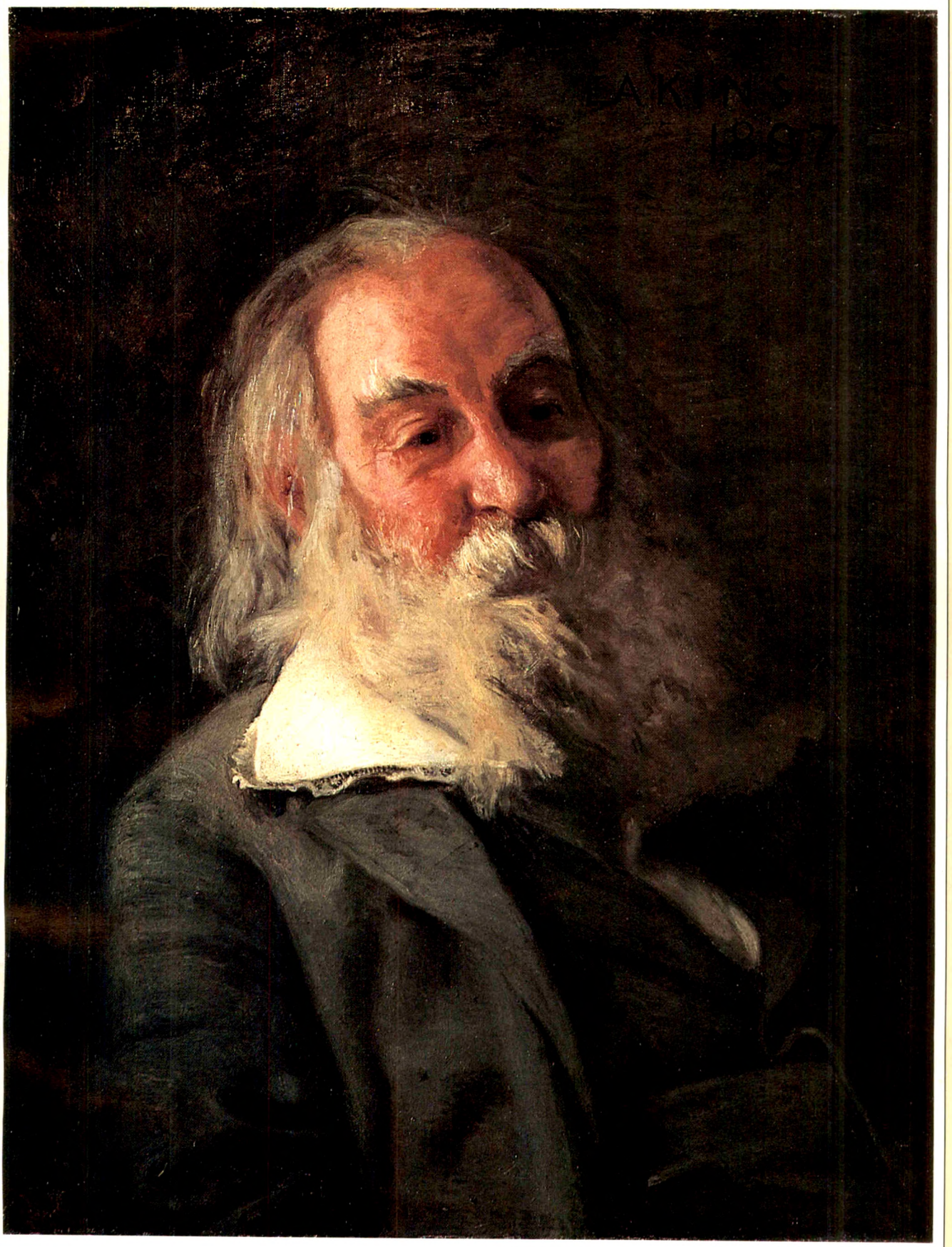
The collection is a pentateuch, with five sections. The Book of Genesis takes us from the beginning, through the colonial and transitional eras, to the emergence of the literature of the republic. The second main section covers the years from 1810 to 1865, beginning with Washington Irving and the Knickerbocker group and ending with Walt Whitman. The major voices of the period 1865 to 1910 are Emily Dickinson, Mark Twain, Henry Adams and Henry James, with other writers treated in the summary form that clarifies "movements"—regionalism, naturalism (imported from Europe), the march of the women. From 1910 to 1945 the claims of "ethnicity and gender" predominate, with Robert Frost, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, William Carlos Williams, Wallace Stevens, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Gertrude Stein and William Faulkner demanding the attention of shared chapters, except for Frost and Faulkner, who get chapters to themselves. The final section takes us from the end of World War II to the present day, when the abundance of American writing forbids capitular hegemony of names and imposes generalities like neo-realist fiction, self-reflexive fiction, literature as radical statement, the avant-garde and experimental writing.

We seem to be past the age when it was possible for a single, or at most double, vision of a national literature to be written. The Columbia history presents no unified point of view: it is synoptic, the work having been parceled out among distinguished scholars, not all American. In this sense the survey is highly democratic: the esthetic comes first with these scholars. Ties with the mother country are frankly admitted, and it is accepted, for instance, that certain currents of libertarian thought owe as much to British Whiggery as to American radicalism. Philosophy, which may or may not be a branch of literature, has its place. Such best sellers as Herman Wouk and Sinclair Lewis (though some of us non-Americans might argue that books like *Youngblood Hawke* and *Babbitt* tell us more about the United States than do Henry James's *The Golden Bowl* and Pound's *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*) are hardly considered.

What clearly emerges over the course of the long chronicle is a growth of confidence: when the United States entered the 20th century and felt the political and economic confidence of a world power, American culture, too, became self-assertive and began to influence the Old World, to which it had formerly seen itself as a kind of cultural annex. National power is bound to affect literature—which is, after all, the way certain clear-sighted citizens of a nation express themselves—and the prestige of so much contemporary American writing reflects the prestige of the nation that begot it.

And yet American literature is essentially subversive. It does not boost America, except satirically. Thoreau denied the rights of the state, and Whitman proclaimed the need for much resistance and little obedience. When the political watchword was progress, Henry Adams prophesied entropy. No major American author has wagged the flag. Landscape may be lyrically exalted, the great cities feared and loved, but American literature rarely expresses devotion to the concept of the nation.

This is one of the generalizations that one can make about this vast subject. The other, which this mammoth chronicle perhaps fails sufficiently to bring out, has to do with what American writers have done with their raw material, which is not a subject matter but a language. Dickinson and Whitman, long before Ezra Pound's injunction to "make it new," were among the remakers of English. Stein and Hemingway, working in Paris, saw James Joyce depending for novelty on the satirization of outmoded forms; they themselves found new forms. What has happened to English in the hands of Americans is the real story of American literature. ♦

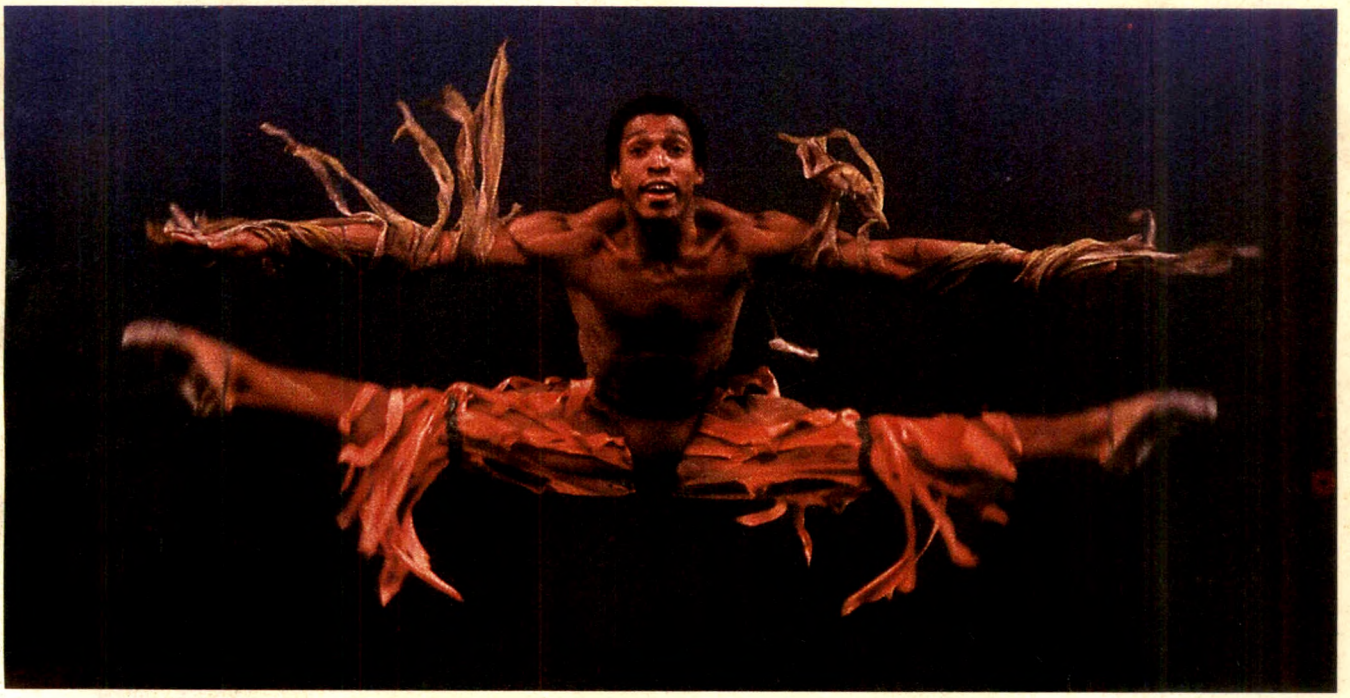


Poet Walt Whitman, portrait by Thomas Eakins, 1887.

Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

THE AMERICAN REVIEW

4/1988



BALLET TODAY

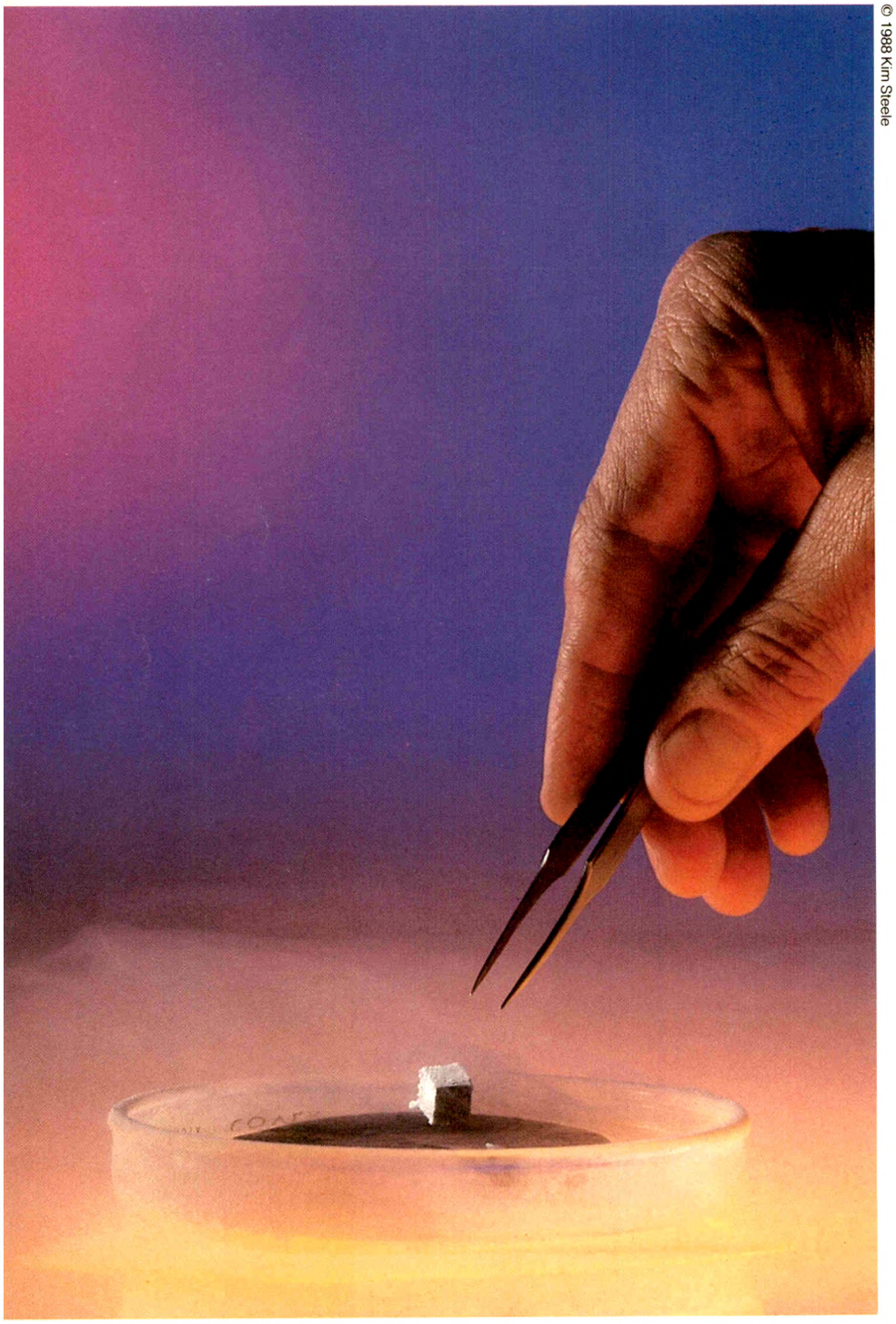
THE NEW ORGANIZATION
By Peter F. Drucker

SOCRATES REVISITED
By I.F. Stone

SAVING THE OZONE

The Magic of Science

In a simple demonstration of modern levitation, a ceramic pellet floats on an invisible magnetic cushion above a dish of superconducting material. The revolutionary new science of superconductivity uses laboratory-produced ceramics that, when chilled to very low temperatures, conduct electricity without losing energy. By experimenting with these materials, scientists hope to develop more efficient forms of power transmission, communications and transportation. The article on page 10 presents a look inside Bell Labs, a leader in superconductor research.



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COVER: *Eddie Shellman of the Dance Theatre of Harlem in a production of the contemporary American ballet* Caravanserai. *See special section on ballet beginning on page 24. Photograph by Martha Swope.*

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THE COMING OF THE NEW ORGANIZATION

By Peter F. Drucker

Over the last 100 years, two major evolutions in management have transformed modern business. The first, around the turn of the century, distinguished management from ownership and established the role of the professional manager. The second major innovation, during the 1920s, brought in the giant "command-and-control" corporation with its emphasis on decentralization and its distinction between a policy-making and an operating staff, a form of organization that is still predominant today.

Now business is entering a third period of change. In this article, management analyst Peter F. Drucker describes the kind of changes the typical corporation will face in the next generation. Driven by technology and by the trend toward specialized knowledge in the work force, business organizations, Drucker argues, will have to become information-based. He suggests that the efficient company of the future is more likely to resemble an organization of specialists such as an orchestra or a hospital than a present-day corporation.

Peter F. Drucker is a professor of social sciences and management at the Claremont Graduate School in California, which recently named its management center after him. He is the author of numerous articles and books, the most recent of which is The Frontiers of Management.

The typical large business 20 years hence will have fewer than half the levels of management of its counterpart today and no more than a third the managers. In its structure, and in its management problems and concerns, the business will bear little resemblance to the typical manufacturing company of the 1950s, which textbooks still consider the norm. It will be more likely to resemble organizations that neither the practicing manager nor the management scholar pays much attention to today: the hospital, the university, the symphony orchestra. Like them, the typical business will be knowledge-based, composed largely of specialists who direct and discipline their own performance through organized feedback from colleagues, customers and headquarters. It will be an information-based organization.

Businesses, especially large ones, have little choice but to become information-based. The center of gravity in employment is moving fast from manual and clerical workers to knowledge workers who resist the command-and-control model that business took from the military 100 years ago. Economics also dictates change, especially the need for large businesses to innovate and to be entrepreneurs. Above all, technology demands the shift.

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Advanced data-processing technology isn't necessary to create an information-based organization, of course. The British built just such an organization in India when "information technology" meant the quill pen, and runners were the "telecommunications" systems. But as advanced technology becomes more prevalent, we have to engage in analysis and diagnosis—that is, in "information"—even more intensively or risk being swamped by the data we generate.

Most computer users use the new technology only to do faster what they have always done, manipulate conventional numbers. But as soon as a company takes the first tentative steps from data to information, its decision processes, management structure and even the way its work gets done begin to be transformed. This is already happening, quite fast, in a number of companies throughout the world.

We can see the first step in this transformation process when we consider the impact of computer technology on capital-investment decisions. There is no one right way to analyze a proposed capital investment. To understand it we need to carry out at least six standard analyses weighing risks and costs against possible returns. Every accounting student is taught these concepts. But before the advent of data processing, the actual analyses would have taken extensive clerical toil to complete. Now anyone with a computer and a spreadsheet program should be able to do them in

a few hours.

The availability of this information transforms capital-investment analysis from opinion into diagnosis, into the rational weighing of alternative assumptions.

The second area affected when a company focuses its data-processing capacity on producing information is its structure. Almost immediately, it becomes clear that the number of management levels and the number of managers can be sharply cut. The reason is straightforward: whole layers of management neither make decisions nor lead. Instead, their main, if not their only, function is to serve as "relays"—human boosters for the faint, unfocused signals that pass for communication in the traditional pre-information organization.

One of America's largest defense contractors made this discovery when it asked what information its corporate and operating managers needed to do their jobs. The search for answers revealed that whole layers of management—perhaps as many as six out of a total of 14—existed only because these questions had not been asked before. The company had had data galore, but had always used those data for control rather than for information.

AN ORGANIZATION OF SPECIALISTS

Information is data endowed with relevance and purpose. Converting data into information thus requires knowledge, and knowledge, by definition, is specialized. The information-based organization requires far more specialists overall than the command-and-control company we are accustomed to. Moreover, the specialists are found in operations, not at corporate headquarters. Indeed, the operating part of the company tends to become an organization of specialists.

Information-based organizations need central operating work such as legal counsel, public relations and labor relations as much as ever. But the need for service staffs—that is, for people without operating responsibilities who advise, counsel or coordinate—shrinks drastically. In its central management, the information-based organization needs few, if any, specialists.

Because of its flatter structure, the large, information-based organization will more closely resemble the businesses of a century ago than today's big companies. Back then, however, all the knowledge lay with the top people. The rest were helpers or hands, who mostly did the same work and did as they were told. In the information-based organization, knowledge will be primarily at the bottom, in the minds of specialists who do different work and direct themselves. Today's organization in which knowledge is concentrated in service staffs, perched between top management and the operating people, will be a phase, an attempt to infuse knowledge from the top rather than obtain information from below.

Finally, work will be done differently in the information-based organization. Traditional departments will serve as guardians of standards, centers for training and assignment of specialists; they won't be where the work gets done. That will happen largely in task-focused teams.

This change is already under way in what used to be the most clearly defined of all departments—research. In pharmaceuticals, in telecommunications, in papermaking, the traditional sequence of research, development, manufacturing and marketing is being replaced by *synchrony*: specialists from all these functions working together from the inception of research to a product's establishment in the market.

How task forces will develop to tackle other business opportunities and problems remains to be seen. The need for a task force, its assignment, its composition, and its leadership will have to be decided case by case. One thing is clear, though: such ad hoc task forces will require greater self-discipline and greater emphasis on individual responsibility for relationships and for communications.

To say that information technology is transforming business is simple. What this transformation will require of companies and top managements is harder to decipher. I find it helpful to look for clues in other kinds of information-based organizations, such as the hospital, the symphony orchestra and the British administration in colonial India.

A hospital of about 400 beds typically has a staff of several hundred physicians and 1200 to 1500 paramedics divided among some 60 spe-



cialties. Each specialty has its own knowledge, training and language. In each specialty, especially the paramedical ones like the clinical lab and physical therapy, there is a head person who is a working specialist rather than a full-time manager. The head of each specialty reports directly to the top, and there is little middle management. A good deal of the work is done in ad hoc teams as required by an individual patient's condition.

NO MIDDLE MANAGEMENT

A symphony orchestra is more instructive, since for some works there may be a few hundred musicians on stage playing together. According to organization theory, then, there should be several group vice-president conductors and perhaps a half-dozen division VP conductors. But that's not how it works. There is only the conductor or chief executive officer (CEO); every one of the musicians plays directly to that person without an intermediary. And each is a high-grade specialist, indeed an artist.

But the best historical example of a large and successful information-based organization, one without any middle management at all, was the British civil administration in India.

The British governed the Indian subcontinent for 200 years, from the middle of the 18th century through World War II, without making any fundamental changes in organization structure or administrative policy. Their "Indian Civil Service" never had more than 1000 members to administer the vast and densely populated subcontinent. Most of the British were quite young; a 30-year-old was an old hand, especially in the early years. Most lived alone in isolated outposts, and for the first hundred years there was no telegraph or railroad.

The organization structure was totally flat. Each district officer reported directly to the provincial political secretary. Each political secretary had at least 100 people reporting directly to him, many times what the doctrine of the span of control would allow. Nevertheless, the system worked remarkably well, in large part because it was designed to ensure that each of its members had the information he needed to do his job.

Each month the district officer spent a whole day writing a report to the political secretary in the provincial capital. He discussed each of his principal tasks—there were only four, each clearly delineated. He put down in detail what he had expected to happen with respect to each of them, what actually did happen and why. Then he wrote down what he expected would happen in the next month with respect to each key task and what he was going to do about it, asked questions about policy and commented on long-term opportunities, problems and needs. In turn, the political secretary wrote

There are probably few orchestra conductors who could coax even one note out of a French horn, let alone show the horn player how to do it. But the conductor can focus the horn player's skill and knowledge on the musicians' joint performance. This focus is what the leaders of an information-based business must achieve.

back a full comment.

On the basis of these examples, what can we say about the requirements of the information-based organization? What are its management problems likely to be? Let's look first at the requirements. Several hundred musicians and their CEO, the conductor, can play together because they all have the same score. It tells both flutist and timpanist what to play and when. And it tells the conductor what to expect from each musician. Similarly, all the specialists in the hospital share a common mission: the care and cure of the sick. The diagnosis is their "score"; it dictates specific action for each member of the medical team.

Information-based organizations, in other words, require clear, common objectives that translate into particular actions. At the same time, however, information-based organizations also need concentration on one objective or, at most, on a few.

Because the "players" in an information-based organization are specialists, they cannot be told how to do their work. There are probably few orchestra conductors who could coax even one note out of a French horn, let alone show the horn player how to do it. But the conductor can focus the horn player's skill and knowledge on the musicians' joint performance. This focus is what the leaders of an information-based business must achieve.

Yet a business has no "score" to play by except the score it writes as it plays. And the performance of a business continually creates new and different scores against which its performance is assessed. So an information-based business must be structured around goals that clearly state management's performance expectations for the enterprise and for each specialist and around organized feedback that compares results with these performance expectations so that every member can exercise self-control.

INFORMATION RESPONSIBILITY

The other requirement of an information-based organization is that everyone takes information responsibility. The bassoonist in the orchestra does so every time he or she plays a note. Doctors and paramedics work with an elaborate system of reports and an information center, the nurse's station on the patient's floor. The district officer in India acted on this responsibility every time he filed a report.

The key to such a system is that everyone asks: who in this organization depends on me for what information? And on whom, in turn, do I depend? Each person's list will include superiors and subordinates, but the most important names on it will be those of colleagues, people with whom one's primary relationship is coordination. The relationship of the internist, the surgeon and the anesthesiologist is one example. But for a pharmaceutical company the relationship of a biochemist, a pharmacologist, the medical director in charge of clinical testing and a marketing specialist is no different. It, too, requires each party to take the fullest information responsibility.

Information responsibility to others is increasingly understood, especially in middle-sized companies. But information responsibility to oneself is still largely neglected. That is, everyone in an organization should constantly think through what information he or she needs to do the job and to make a contribution.

This may be the most radical break with the way even highly computerized businesses are being run today. There, people either assume the more data they have, the more information—a valid assumption when data were scarce, but one that leads to data overload and information blackout now that data are plentiful. Or they believe that information specialists know what data executives and professionals need in order to have information. But information specialists are tool makers. They can say what tool to use to hammer upholstery nails into a chair. Executives need to decide whether their companies should be upholstering a chair at all.

Executives and professional specialists need to think through what information they need: first, to know what they are doing; then, to decide what they should be doing; and finally, to appraise how well they are doing. Until this happens, departments of management-information systems are likely to remain cost centers rather than become the result centers they could be.

Most large businesses have little in common with the examples we have been looking at. Yet to remain competitive they will have to convert themselves into information-based organizations, and fairly quickly. They will have to change old habits and acquire new ones. And the more successful a company has been, the more difficult and painful this process is apt to be. It will threaten the jobs, status and opportunities of a good many people in the organization, especially the people in middle management who tend to be the least mobile and to feel most secure in their work, positions, relationships and behavior.

The information-based organization will also pose its own special management problems. I see as critical:

1. Developing rewards, recognition and career opportunities for specialists.

2. Creating unified vision in an organization of specialists.

3. Devising the management structure for an organization of task forces.

4. Ensuring the supply, preparation and testing of top management people.

Bassoonists presumably neither want nor expect to be anything but bassoonists; their career opportunities consist of moving from second bassoon to first bassoon and perhaps of moving to a better, more prestigious orchestra. Similarly, many

medical technologists neither expect nor want to be anything but medical technologists; their career opportunities consist of a fairly good chance of moving up to senior technician, and a slim chance of becoming lab director. The district officer in India had practically no chance for professional growth except to be relocated, after a three-year stint, to a bigger district.

Opportunities for specialists in an information-based business organization should be more plentiful than they are in an orchestra or hospital, let alone than they were in the old Indian Civil Service. But, as in these organizations, they will be opportunities for advancement within the specialty and for limited advancement at that. Advancement into "management" will be the exception, for there will be far fewer middle-management positions to move into. This contrasts sharply with the traditional organization where the main line of advancement is out of the specialty and into general management.

More than 30 years ago General Electric tackled this problem by creating "parallel opportunities" for "individual professional contributors." Many companies have followed this example, but professional specialists themselves have largely rejected it as a solution. To them—and to their management colleagues—the only meaningful opportunities are promotions into management. And the compensation structure in most businesses reinforces this attitude because it is heavily biased towards managerial positions and titles.

There are no easy answers to this problem. Some help may come from looking at large law and consulting firms, where even senior partners tend to be specialists, and associates who are not promoted to partner are dropped fairly early. But whatever scheme is developed will work only if the values and compensation structure of business are drastically changed.

The second challenge that management faces is giving its organization of specialists a common vision, a view of the whole.

In the Indian Civil Service, the British district officer was expected to see the "whole" of his district. But to enable him to concentrate on it, the government services that arose in the 19th century—forestry, irrigation, the archaeological survey, public health and sanitation, roads—were organized outside the administrative structure, and had virtually no contact with the district officer. This meant that the district officer became increasingly isolated from the activities that often had the greatest importance for his district. In the end, only the provincial government or the central government in Delhi had a view of the "whole," and it was an increasingly abstract view.

FOSTERING PROFESSIONALISM

A business simply cannot function this way. It needs a view of the whole and a focus on the whole to be shared among many of its professional specialists, certainly among the senior ones. And yet it will have to foster the pride and professionalism of its specialists—if only because, in the absence of opportunities to move into middle management, their motivation must come from that pride and professionalism.

One way to foster professionalism is through assignments to task forces. The information-based business will use smaller self-governing units, assigning them tasks tidy enough for "a good man to get his arms around," as the old phrase has it. But to what extent should information-based businesses rotate specialists out of their specialties and into new ones? And to what extent will top management have to accept as its first priority making and maintaining a common vision across professional specialties?

Heavy reliance on task-force teams solves one problem, but it aggravates another: the management structure of the information-based organization. Who will the business's managers be? Will they be task-force leaders? Or will there be a two-headed monster—a specialist structure, comparable, perhaps, to the attending physicians in a hospital, and an administrative structure of task-force leaders?

We are entering a period of change: the shift from the command-and-control organization to the information-based organization. We can perceive what this organization will look like. We can point to central problems of its values, structure and behavior. But the job of building it is still ahead of us. It is the managerial challenge of the future.

The decisions we face on the role and function of the task-force leaders are risky and controversial. Is theirs a permanent assignment, analogous to the job of the supervisory nurse in the hospital? Or is it a function of the task that changes as the task does? Is it an assignment or a position? Does it carry a rank, and if it does, will the task-force leaders become in time what the product managers have been at one large company: the basic units of management and the company's field officers? Might the task-force leaders eventually replace department heads and vice presidents?

Signs of every one of these developments exist, but there is neither a clear trend nor much understanding as to what each entails. Yet each task-force role would give rise to a different organizational structure from any we are familiar with.

Finally, the toughest problem will probably be to ensure the supply, preparation and testing of top management people. This is an old dilemma as well as a major reason for the

acceptance of decentralization in large businesses in the last 40 years. But the existing business organization has a great many middle-management positions that are supposed to prepare and test a person. As a result, there are usually many people to choose from when filling a senior-management slot. With the number of middle-management positions sharply cut, where will the information-based organization's top executives come from? What will be their preparation? How will they have been tested?

Decentralization into autonomous units will surely be even more critical than it is now. Perhaps we will copy the German *Gruppe* in which decentralized units are set up as separate companies with their own top managements. The Germans use this model precisely because of their tradition of promoting people in their specialties, especially in research and engineering; if they did not have commands in near-independent subsidiaries to put people in, they would have little opportunity to train and test their most promising professionals.

We may also find that more top management jobs in big companies are filled by hiring people from smaller companies. This is the way that major orchestras get their conductors—a young conductor earns his or her experience and acclaim in a small orchestra or opera house, only to be hired away by a larger one. The heads of a good many large hospitals have had similar careers.

Can business follow the example of the orchestra and hospital, where top management has become a separate career? Conductors and hospital administrators come out of courses in conducting or schools of hospital administration. In France, large companies are often run by men who have spent their entire previous careers in government service. But in most countries this would be unacceptable to the organization. (Only France has the mystique of the *grandes écoles*.) And even in France, businesses, especially large ones, are becoming too demanding to be run by people without firsthand experience and a proven success record.

Thus the entire top-management process—preparation, testing, succession—will become even more problematic than it already is. There will be a growing need for experienced businesspeople to go back to school. And business schools will surely need to work out what successful specialists must know to prepare themselves for high-level positions as business leaders.

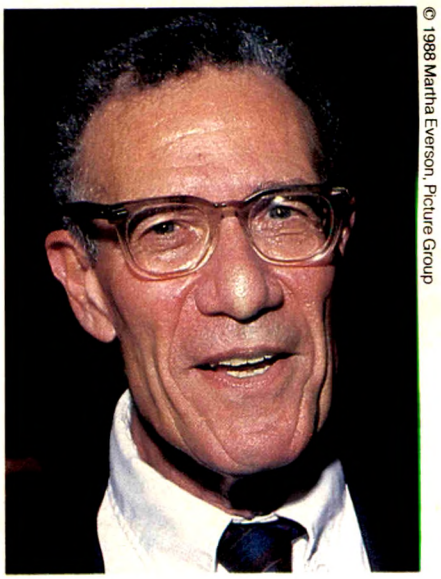
EVOLUTION OF THE ORGANIZATION

Since modern business enterprise first arose in the latter half of the 19th century, after the Civil War in the United States and the Franco-Prussian War in Europe, there have been two major evolutions in the concept and structure of organizations. The first took place between 1895 and 1905. It distinguished management from ownership and established management as a type of work in its own right. This happened first in Germany when Georg Siemens, founder and head of Germany's premier bank, saved the electrical-apparatus company his cousin Werner had founded after Werner's heirs had mismanaged it into near collapse. By threatening to cut off the bank's loans, he forced his cousins to turn the company's management over to professionals. Similarly, J.P. Morgan, Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller Sr. soon undertook their massive restructurings of U.S. railroads and industries.

The second evolutionary change took place 20 years later. The development of what we still see as the modern corporation began with Pierre S. du Pont's restructuring of his family company in the early 1920s and continued with Alfred P. Sloan's redesign of General Motors a few years later. They introduced the command-and-control organization of today with its emphasis on decentralization, central service staffs, personnel management, the whole apparatus of budgets and controls, the important distinction between policy and operations. This stage culminated in the reorganization of General Electric in the early 1950s, an action that perfected the model most big businesses around the world (including Japanese organizations) still follow.

Now we are entering a third period of change: the shift from the command-and-control organization, the organization of departments and divisions, to the information-based organization, the organization of knowledge specialists. We can perceive what this organization will look like. We can identify some of its main characteristics and requirements. We can point to central problems of values, structure and behavior. But the job of building the information-based organization is still ahead of us. It is the managerial challenge of the future. ♦

NOBEL ECONOMIST ROBERT SOLOW



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By Eliot Marshall

In two pioneering essays published in 1956 and 1957, Robert Solow proferred a theory that technology, not capital or increases in the work force, is the key factor in economic growth. For more than three decades, his theory has influenced a generation of economists, and, in 1987, he won the Nobel Prize for Economic Science.

In this article, Eliot Marshall, a writer for Science *magazine, presents a brief sketch of Solow and a summary of his career.*

There may have been a moment in the early 1950s when Robert Solow, winner of the 1987 Nobel Prize in Economic Science, was not in the mainstream of American economic thinking. That was before Solow had published his papers on technology and economic growth, written when he was a 32-year-old assistant professor at MIT.

But when the papers came out and were read, the mainstream shifted course and enveloped Solow. He has stood squarely in the deep part of the stream since then, leading many younger economists to venture in, tossing jokes at those he thinks are clinging to the shallows.

Economists speak warmly of Solow's contribution to the field not just as a writer but as a person. "He's been a great moral force within the community" because of the integrity of his research and professional life, says Dale Jorgenson of Harvard. The Nobel award in this case was "long overdue," says Henry Aaron of the Brookings Institution, who also mentions Solow's charm and wit.

These comments come from Solow's own team, in the sense that these writers share a common vision of how the macroeconomy works and how governments can intervene to ameliorate its effects, derived from the theories of John Maynard Keynes. But friendly words are heard in the opposing camp as well, among the free-market, monetarist and neoclassical writers based at the University of Chicago. Robert Lucas Jr., an opponent of government meddling in the markets who is mentioned as a potential Nobel winner, says that in the 1950s "Solow was a real pioneer in pushing a whole field in a dynamic direction. He was a big influence on me and a lot of other people.... His work has had such wide influence that just about everybody believes it; ask any economist."

The papers the Nobel committee cited in announcing the prize were published in quick succession in 1956 and 1957. The first proposed a novel theory to explain how national economies grow. The second offered a means of testing the theory, laying out a system by which the inputs to growth could be broken down into pieces and the pieces measured. This work established some new economic truths and proved them by rigorous methods.

Like other discoveries, this one seems obvious now, but was not when first described. Solow recalls that like many others he was drawn to this topic after World War II by the economic drama of the newly decolonized nations. Everyone expected them to follow the path of the industrial nations, he says, but how? What would make their economies grow?

Economists had been preoccupied with the fluctuations of business cycles, the periods of growth and recession that hover about long-term trends of growth in the gross national product. But relatively little attention had been given to the question of why one country has a growth trend of three percent; a second, four percent; and a third, two percent. Most attention focused on 10-year bits of economic behavior. Solow wanted to look at longer periods.

The wisdom at the time was that investment of savings was the key to growth. The more a nation saved, the faster it could grow. "What distinguished poor countries from rich countries was that poor countries were able to save very little because they were poor," Solow says. The rich ones would grow faster because they started out rich. That was an idea he rejected. Another was the notion that an industrial economy—once launched on a path of high growth—would have no choice but to continue along a narrowly prescribed growth trend line. "If it ever drifted off in one direction or the other, those movements would be magnified," leading to a crisis.

Solow formulated a new theory that did away with the "knife edge" description of growth, allowing for greater flexibility in planning. He found that the existing literature omitted forces that tend to balance one another and keep the economy in

Reprinted from *Science*, Vol. 238, No. 4828, pp. 754-755, November 6, 1987. © 1987 by the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

good health. His technical efforts to dissect growth made a big impression, for he came up with a startling and unexpected fact: capital investment is not the key factor in economic growth, not by a long shot. Neither is the increase in workers. Solow showed with statistics on wage and property income between 1909 and 1957 that neither of these two was the most significant element. Instead, it was a residual factor, an undefined, broad category that has come to be known as innovation or technology.

Publication of this finding made a splash in 1957, as several of Solow's colleagues point out, partly because it coincided with the Soviet Union's launch of Sputnik. Solow provided the intellectual basis and the space race provided the political impetus for an intense national drive to promote science and technology. It is now taken as an article of faith that one of the best uses of federal funds is to invest them in basic research. For example, Ronald Reagan's January 1987 budget priorities statement justified a 76 percent increase in research funding between 1982 and 1988.

In the decades since Solow published his papers, many others have tried to break down the residual "technology" factor into smaller pieces to get a clearer picture of the processes that work to promote growth. Among the economists who have explored the topic are Edward Denison of Brookings, Edwin Mansfield of the University of Pennsylvania, and Jorgenson and Zvi Griliches of Harvard, to name a few.

Denison, who recently surveyed 500 articles on technology and growth, warns that many people may not appreciate how hard it is to pin down the elements of this vague factor known as innovation. He has concluded from his own work that government-funded research and development (R&D) probably are not the most important parts for the economy. "It doesn't look like you can account for very much of the growth rate through the increase in R&D expenditures over the last 25 years, even if you assume a very high rate of return on expenditures," he says. "There just isn't enough money there." Denison thinks an unstructured kind of innovation may be more important: "You know, when people are working, they notice things" and make numerous small improvements. Others, including Griliches, stress the importance of education as a promoter of knowledge and invention. Ideas like these have led to further debates on the value of "human capital" and the need to make American industry "competitive." These subjects trace back to the Solow papers.

In the 1960s, Solow turned to other things. He took a two-year stint as a staffer in the Kennedy White House in 1961 and 1962. Solow and Arthur Okun were staff economists on a Council of Economic Advisers that included Kermit Gordon, James Tobin and Walter Heller, the chairman. Kenneth Arrow also joined the staff later, making this a triple-Nobel group. "That was one of the greatest periods of my life," says Solow, but by the end of 1962, "it was enough." He says he could have had a role in the Johnson and Carter administrations, but, "I'm an academic. I'm happiest sitting with a pencil and pad of paper and trying to figure something out at my leisure. And I like teaching." And that is what he has done at MIT for 38 years.

Solow earned his bachelor's and Ph.D. degrees from Harvard, but went to MIT because it offered him a job. He joined a new economics department founded by Paul Samuelson. One of the other assistant professors was George Shultz, now secretary of state, who called to congratulate Solow after he won the Nobel Prize.

According to Jorgenson, many other schools have tried to hire Solow: "Harvard, Yale, Chicago—everybody tried to recruit him. But he was dedicated to Samuelson, and they were the backbone of that department for 25 years. MIT's department of economics has had the highest ratings in the United States for the last 10 years. It's the best."

Solow says, "A man would have to be a fool to go somewhere just for money when instead he could sit and talk with Paul Samuelson every day." Solow and Samuelson are leaders in the Keynesian school, which despite earlier glories, is somewhat on the defensive these days. It was beset by criticism from the monetarists in the 1970s, led by Milton Friedman of the University of Chicago. He pointed to the Keynesian policies of the 1960s as a cause for the prolonged inflation of the 1970s. Under the rubric *money matters*, the monetarists argued that through inattention to financial effects, the government had created a dangerous condition in which productivity was sinking, unemployment was high, and inflation was rising. In debating these charges, Solow agreed that money matters, but not as much as Friedman said.

A younger generation of Chicago economists, known as the neoclassicists, has taken up the cudgels against government interference in the marketplace. They use elegant theory and impressive technical artillery to convey their message, but Solow has dismissed it as "far from reality." In his book *Conversations with Economists*, Arjo Klamer challenged Solow to explain why he uses jokes to answer serious arguments made by these young economists. Solow's response was telling. "Sometimes I think it's a flaw in my character...but there's another side, too," Solow said. "Suppose someone sits down where you are sitting right now and announces that he is Napoleon Bonaparte. The last thing I want to do with him is to get involved in a discussion of cavalry tactics at the battle of Austerlitz.... Now [the neoclassicists] like nothing better than to get drawn into technical discussions because you have tacitly gone along with their fundamental assumptions.... Since I find that fundamental framework ludicrous, I respond by treating it as ludicrous—that is, by laughing at it." ♦

INSIDE BELL

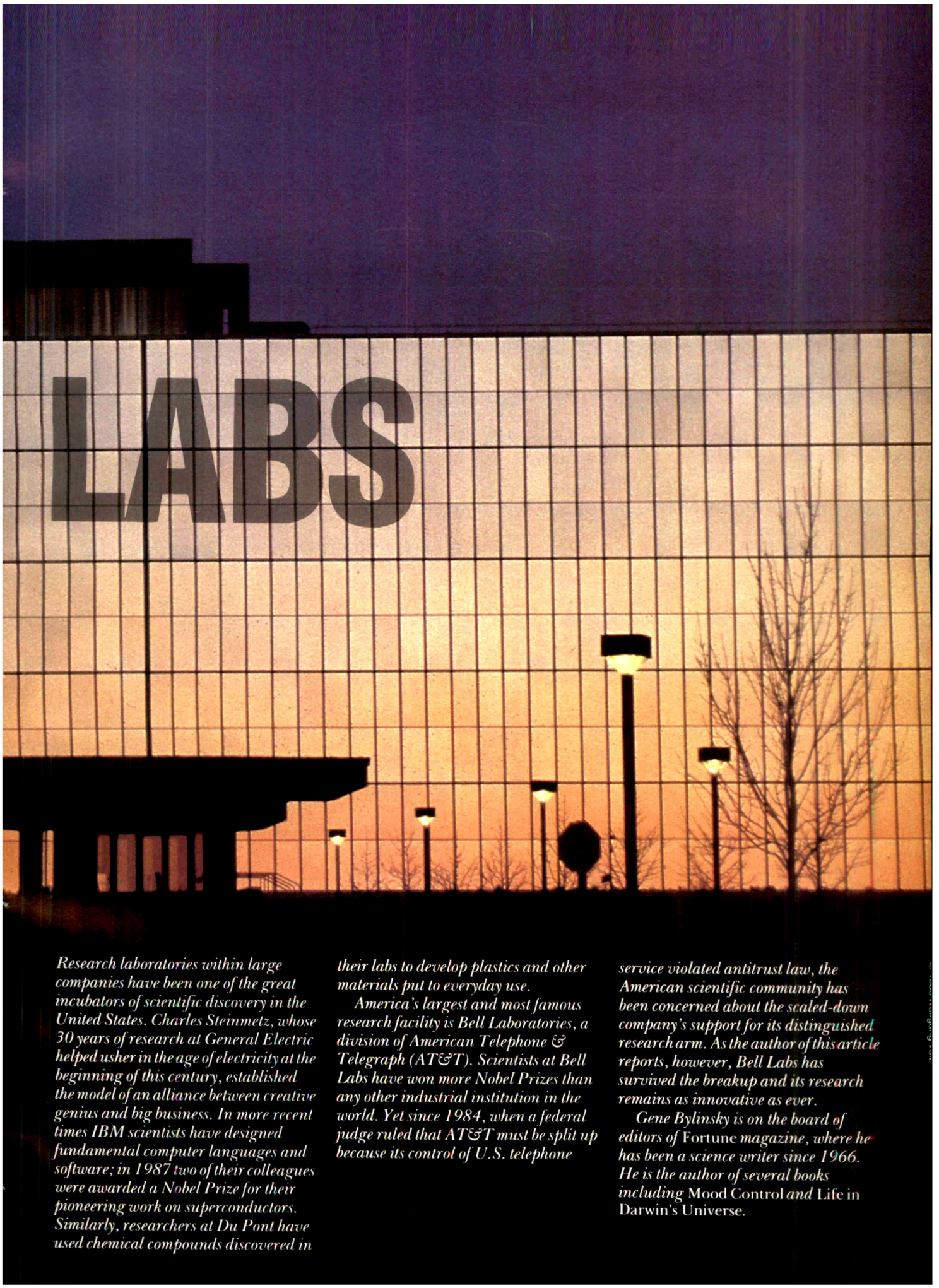
By Gene Bylinsky

Scientific advances at America's top research laboratory run the gamut from building an efficient phone system to discovering evidence of the Big Bang.



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Replica of first transistor, invented at Bell Labs in 1947.



Research laboratories within large companies have been one of the great incubators of scientific discovery in the United States. Charles Steinmetz, whose 30 years of research at General Electric helped usher in the age of electricity at the beginning of this century, established the model of an alliance between creative genius and big business. In more recent times IBM scientists have designed fundamental computer languages and software; in 1987 two of their colleagues were awarded a Nobel Prize for their pioneering work on superconductors. Similarly, researchers at Du Pont have used chemical compounds discovered in their labs to develop plastics and other materials put to everyday use.

America's largest and most famous research facility is Bell Laboratories, a division of American Telephone & Telegraph (AT&T). Scientists at Bell Labs have won more Nobel Prizes than any other industrial institution in the world. Yet since 1984, when a federal judge ruled that AT&T must be split up because its control of U.S. telephone service violated antitrust law, the American scientific community has been concerned about the scaled-down company's support for its distinguished research arm. As the author of this article reports, however, Bell Labs has survived the breakup and its research remains as innovative as ever.

Gene Bylinsky is on the board of editors of Fortune *magazine, where he has been a science writer since 1966. He is the author of several books including* Mood Control *and* Life in Darwin's Universe.

Bell Laboratories, the premier corporate research facility in the United States for most of its 62-year history, has produced the transistor, the laser, the solar cell and the first communications satellite, as well as sound motion pictures, the science of radio astronomy and crucial evidence for the theory that a Big Bang created the universe. Today the vital signs are still strong at the Bell Lab headquarters in northern New Jersey, putting to rest fears that without the vast revenue base provided by AT&T, the parent operating company, Bell Labs might wither into just another run-of-the-mill industrial research and development (R&D) operation.

Not only has basic research come through the court-ordered breakup of AT&T largely unscathed, but Bell Labs is also branching into new commercial areas—in part by launching new R&D companies—and looking into licensing of companies as far afield from telecommunications as airlines and shipping firms.

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Nobel laureate Arno Penzias, head of research.

Historically, basic research absorbed only about 10 percent of manpower and spending at Bell Labs, and that proportion remains unchanged. Most of the employees are engineers, who have worked on applications, not basic research.

But basic research at the Labs has always been a huge attention-getter because of its unmatched results and epochal discoveries. The 1947 invention of the transistor set off the world microelectronics and computer revolution. Seven Bell Lab scientists have won Nobel Prizes. In 1985 President Reagan awarded Bell Labs the National Medal of Technology—the only U.S. laboratory ever singled out for it.

What happens at Bell Labs is of vital interest to American industry because of the labs' high quality of research and because it has been strong where the United States now finds itself weak: in the transfer of research results into products. Says Robert M. White, president of the National Academy of Engineering: "America's problem is not lack of basic research but inadequate conversion of scientific discovery to commercialization. Bell Labs does that very well indeed."

Bell Labs is striving to help AT&T's businesses by tailoring basic research more closely to the needs of the parent company without sacrificing the scope and sweep of investigations. The economics and psychology departments have been cut drastically while robotics and computer science have grown, but that shift in emphasis involved only about 40 of the 200 or so scientists who pursue the purest kind of pure research.

"To an outside observer it may seem that we've gone product oriented, but the intellectual content of the work is the same," says Arno A. Penzias, vice-president in charge of research at Bell Labs. Penzias, an ebullient astrophysicist, made his mark soon after he arrived at the labs in 1961. He was asked to join a committee of older scientists who were trying to devise the best way to calculate the precise positions of communications satellites. The scientists were talking about setting up tall, expensive radio masts when Penzias piped up with the suggestion that nature's own radio masts—radio stars, which emit characteristic frequencies from fixed positions in the sky—would serve equally well at no cost whatever. Penzias's idea was accepted and the committee disbanded on the spot.

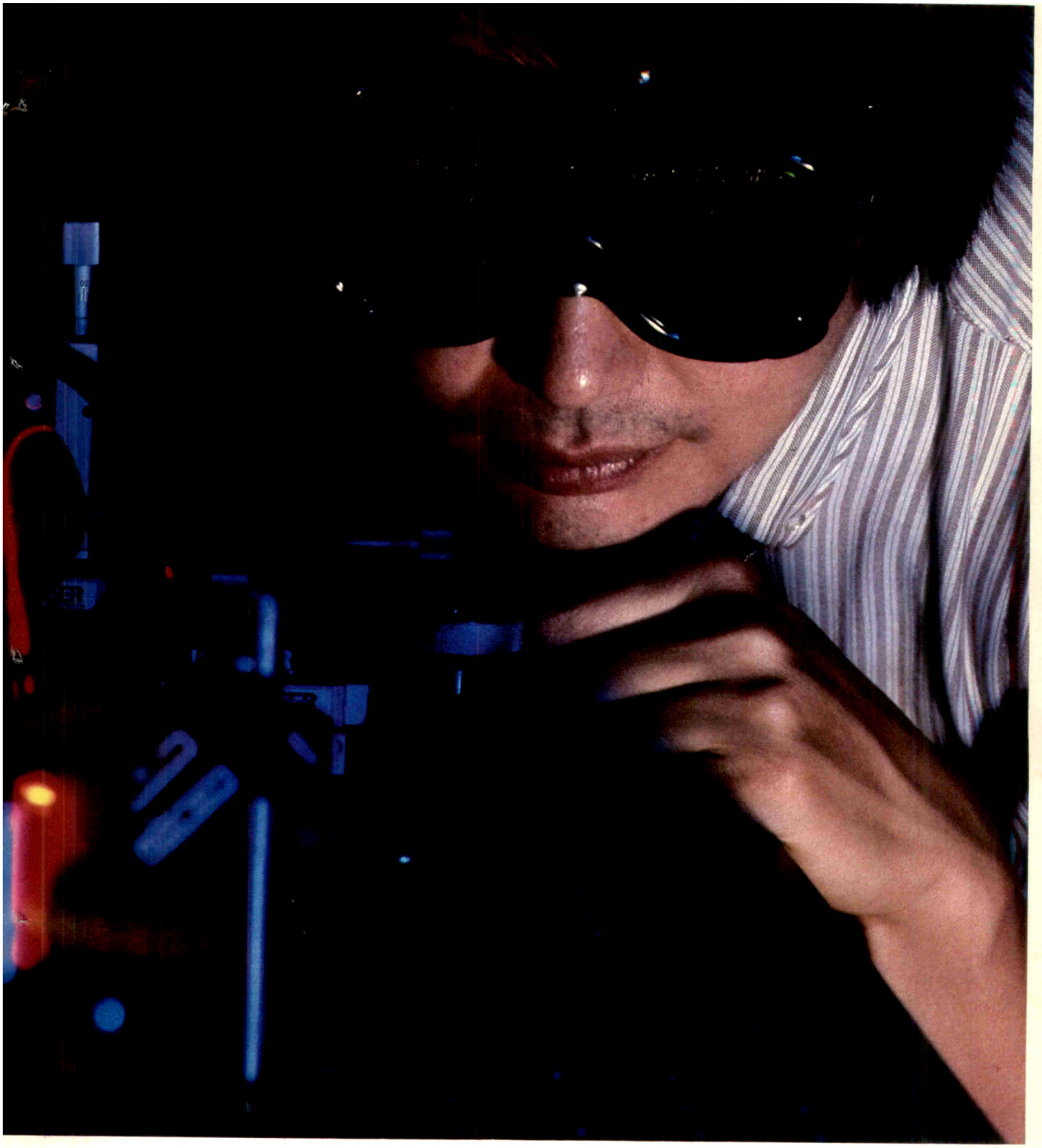
Later, Penzias and his colleague Robert Wilson built measuring devices for Bell Labs' radiotelescope as part of their effort to track down the source of static that often interfered with their studies of radio waves from the Milky Way. The noise they studied turned out to be the residual radiation from the Big Bang; for their discovery, the two men shared a Nobel Prize in 1978.

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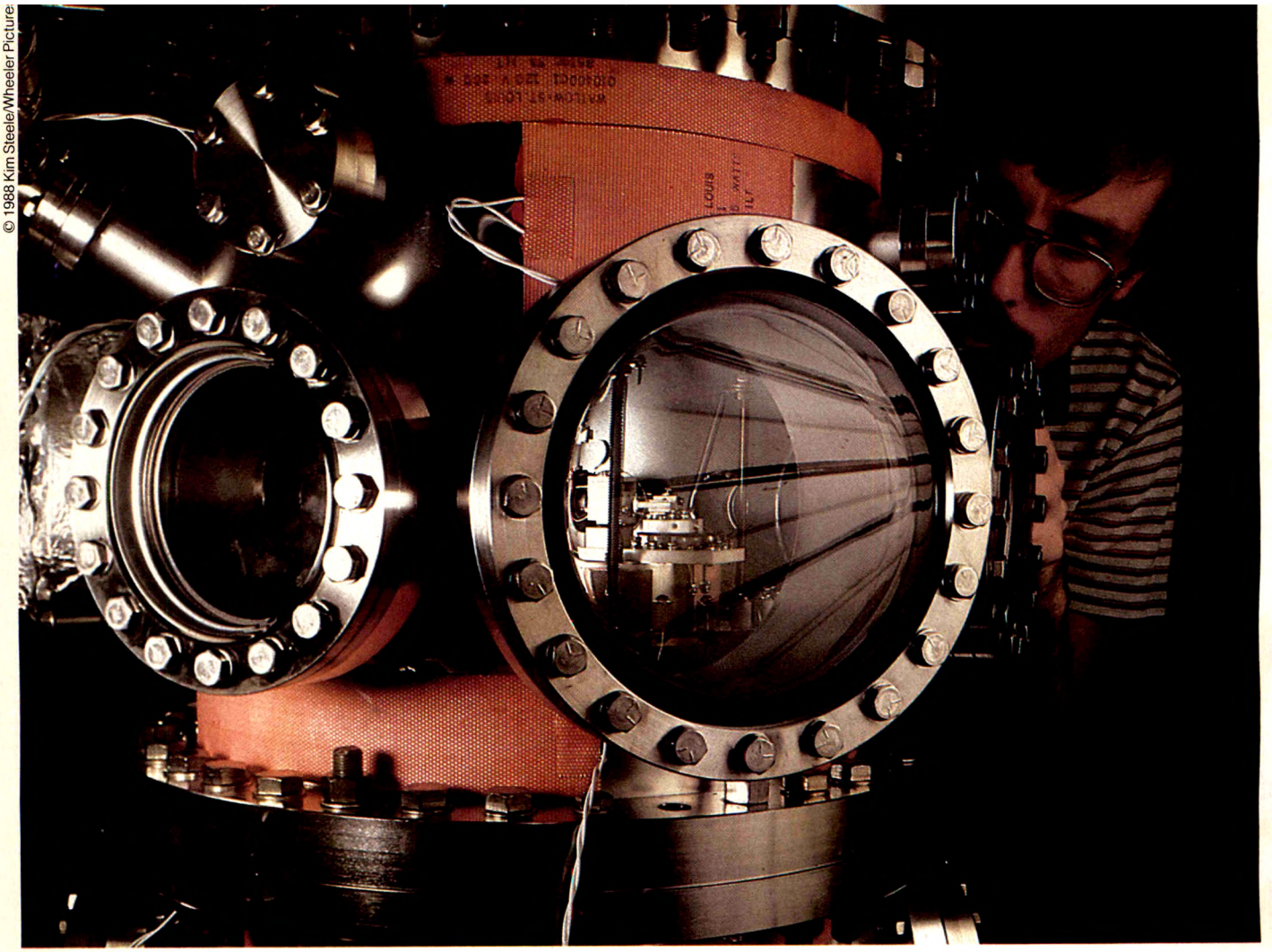


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From *Fortune* magazine.



A researcher studies a laser, part of Bell Labs' work in the fledgling field of optical computing, which uses light instead of electrical impulses to carry information. The lab recently developed the first optical transistor, with lasers that emit the smallest known particles of light (photons) through hair-thin fibers. Bell researchers are now trying to integrate this technology with standard electronic computers, to create systems that can work 1000 times faster than their present-day counterparts. Scientists worldwide think that the next generation of information-based technology will be built on this new "optoelectronics."

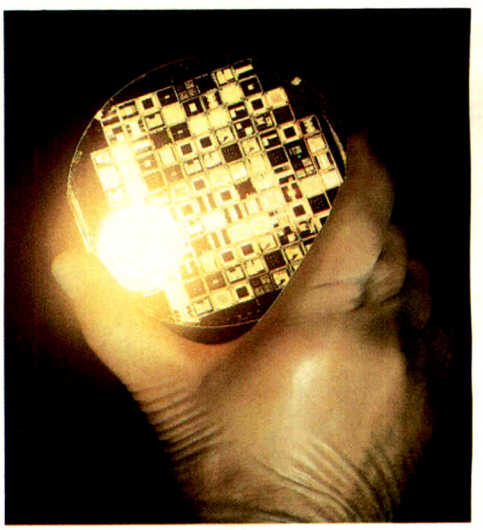
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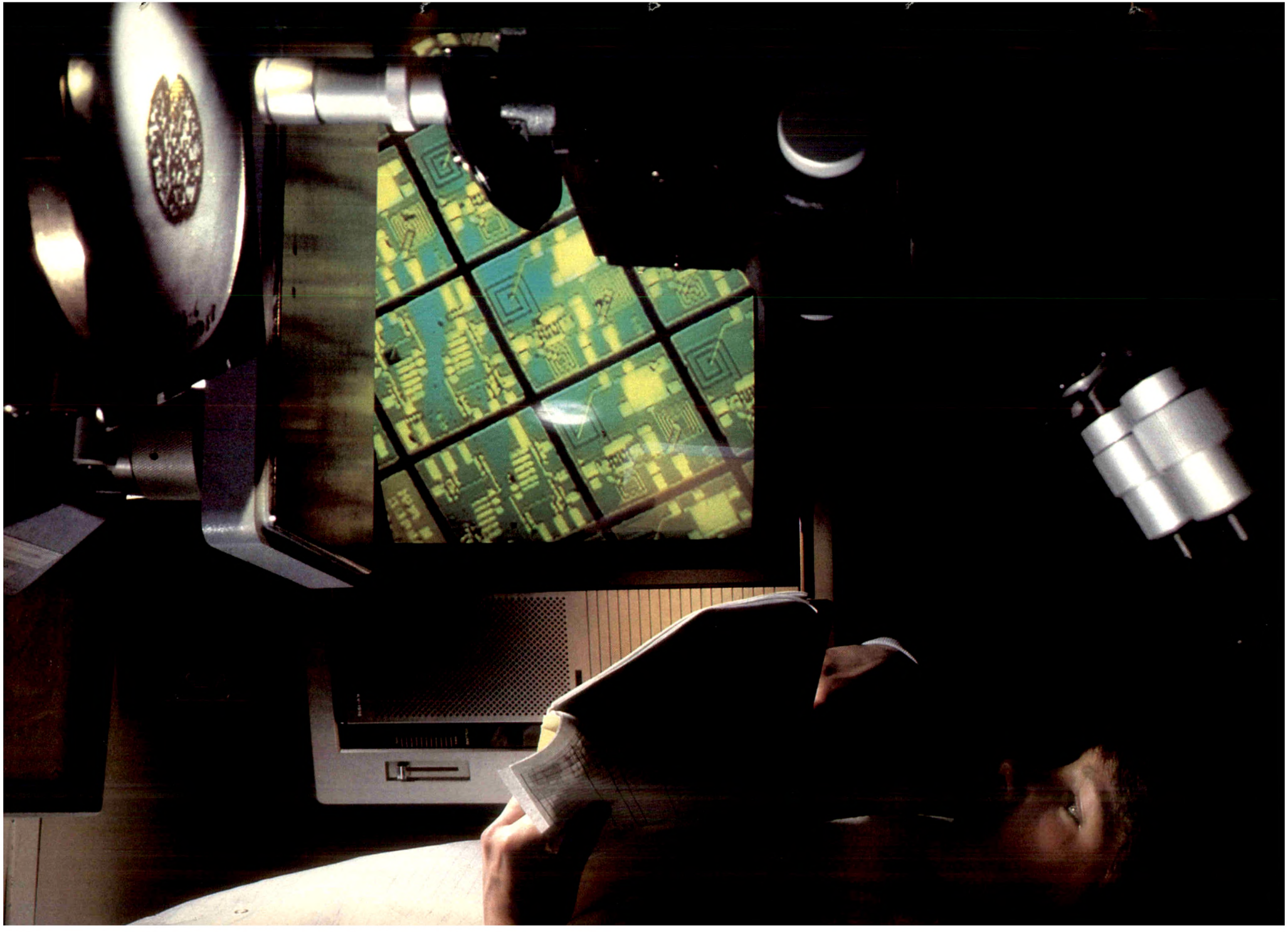


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A Bell Lab scientist readies a huge scanning tunneling microscope (top), a device that aims a weak electric current whose electrons can "tunnel" beneath a surface and send back three-dimensional pictures of atoms enlarged millions of times. The lab is also a leader in a different kind of surface physics using a scanning electron microscope (far right), which employs a computer to interpret what the microscope sees. Here the microscope enlarges on its screen the intricate connections of a microprocessor, the central component in a new kind of computer design known as a neural network. Shown at right is a single silicon chip from a neural net whose circuitry mimics the structure of an animal brain. Using this design, researchers hope to make computers that can "recognize" and "remember" by finding patterns as humans do.

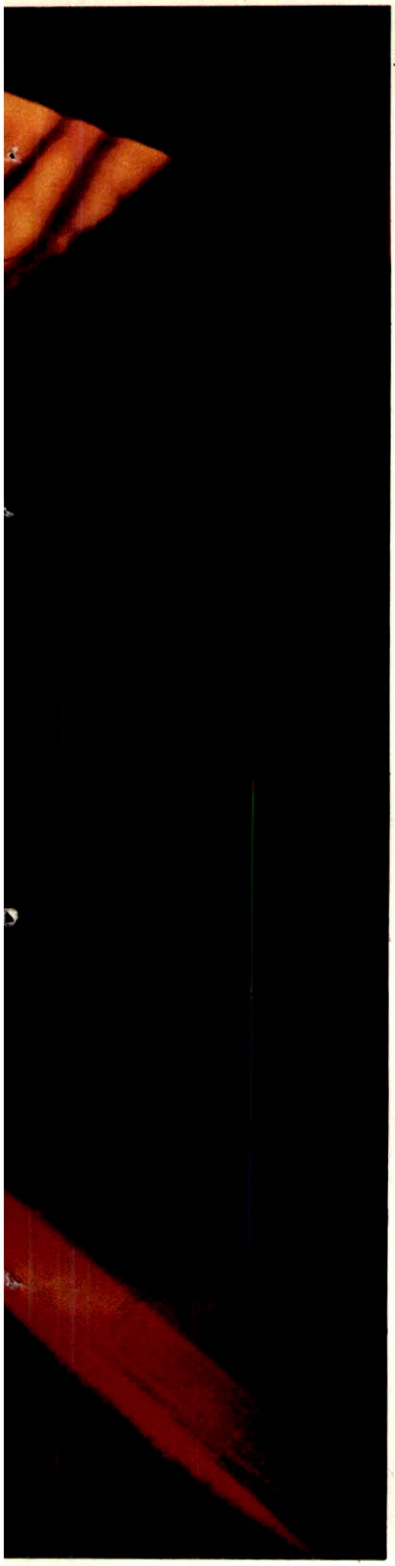
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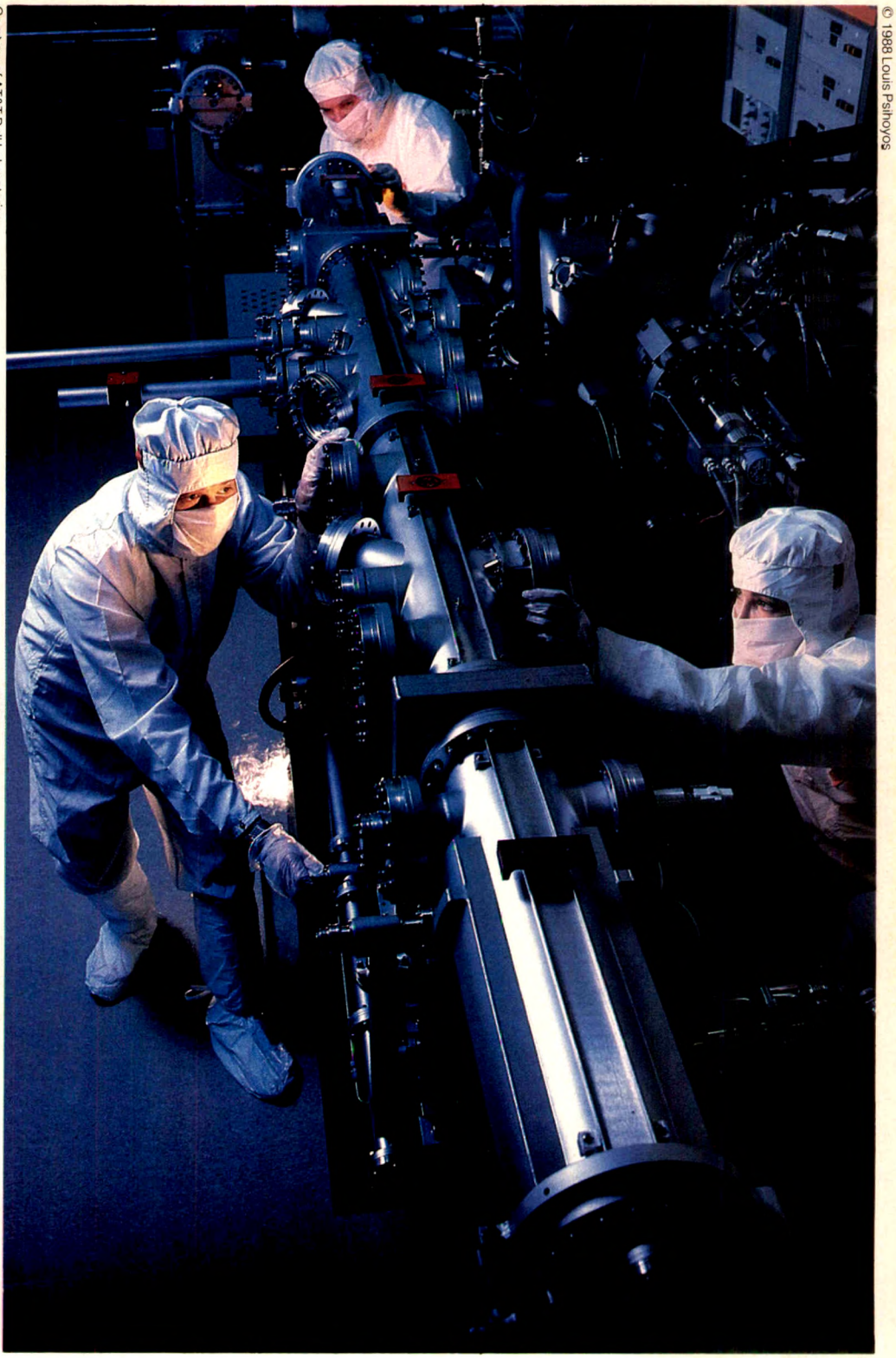




A recent product of Bell Labs' applied research, the optical amplifier (above) will soon help improve transmission along AT&T's telephone lines. Particles of light carrying voice and data messages through fiber-optic cables grow indistinct over distance. Amplifiers will boost these signals, turning red light to the most intense, white light. One of the lab's amplifiers sent a signal a record-breaking 372 kilometers. The molecular beam epitaxy machine (right), developed at Bell Labs in 1976, makes specialized computer chips. It deposits a thin film of a substance one atom at a time onto a silicon wafer. In one of its applications, this high-tech form of spray-painting transforms an ordinary computer chip into a laser semiconductor used in optoelectronics.



Courtesy of AT&T Bell Laboratories



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—continued from page 12

The scope of research at Bell remains wider than at most other industrial labs and even some universities. The staff includes 3430 Ph.D.s—more than the total research staff of the closest rival corporate lab, at IBM. The scientists at Bell are spread among physics, chemistry, computer science, mathematics, electronics and sundry other fields. Bell Labs' method has always been to assemble a huge mass of diverse specialists who interact closely. The sprawling headquarters building is an immense beehive. It houses more than 3000 researchers, product developers and support staff along lengthy corridors lined with hundreds of small labs crammed with the latest instruments.

The physics-research division alone employs 250; it's larger and more diverse then most university physics departments. Investigations range from basic studies of the nature of matter, including such current topics in theoretical physics as instabilities and chaos, to building ceramic superconductors and creating so-called neural networks in silicon chips that mimic rudimentary animal brain pathways. Electronics and optics are two other large areas of emphasis. Recently AT&T began to install the world's most advanced fiber-optic transmission system, developed at Bell Labs, which can speed 24,000 telephone calls simultaneously through a pair of fibers, each twice the thickness of a human hair. It has 40 percent more capacity than any other commercial system.

The most basic work at Bell Labs has a way of merging into development, though that's not immediately apparent from the activities of some of the basic scientists. One recently reported on the activities of ants in the jungles of Brazil; another observes faint galaxies at the edge of the universe from observatories in Chile and Hawaii. The student of ants, Thomas Gradel, reports that a major cause of acid rain in the Amazon is formic acid, a pungent, colorless substance released by the decomposing bodies of ants. However, Gradel's interest in the Amazonian ants is highly practical: he is a corrosion chemist, and part of his job is to find out why telephone equipment can fail in various environments.

The stargazer, astrophysicist J. Anthony Tyson, has his feet on the ground as well. He is trying to improve another Bell Lab invention, the charge coupled device—in effect a silicon chip that can see. It has revolutionized astronomy because it collects light up to 1000 times more efficiently than film, but it also has potential uses as the eyes of robots and in the precision manufacture of semiconductors. Tyson is one of a handful of Bell's basic scientists who "couple us to the universe of science," as Penzias says. "It's a small but vital part of our business strategy to have a few scientists do work that gives Bell Labs a connection to the universities and the rest of the scientific community that it couldn't get otherwise."

Among other things, such connections help attract young scientists. Bell Labs pays competitive or somewhat higher salaries than other major corporate labs, such as those at IBM and Du Pont. And although Penzias says that some scientists earn more at Bell Labs, money is not the main draw for most of them. The freedom, the facilities and first-class colleagues come before that.

Harvesting the fruits of research happens faster than it did in the good old days. Bell Lab President Ian M. Ross is a subdued British-born Ph.D. in electrical engineering with several advances in semiconductors to his credit. He cites the emergence and the rapid adoption of a remarkable mathematical shortcut to the celebrated traveling-salesman problem, which requires devising the shortest possible route connecting a given number of destinations. Indian-born mathematician Narendra Karmarkar described this new insight in 1984. Where programmers and mathematicians once took days to solve a problem with thousands of variables, the Karmarkar algorithm allows them to do so in minutes. AT&T is already using the algorithm to design a vast and complex phone network among the 20 nations of the Pacific Rim. The algorithm is useful in other fields as well; Bell Labs is getting ready to apply it to airline and shipping businesses.

Competing against the rest of the world is teaching Bell Labs' product developers to couple R&D even more closely to both manufacturing and market needs. In the past, technology drove Bell Labs' development; now the customer does. A classic example of a technology-driven product: the Picturephone of the mid-1950s. It worked well, but market studies of the potential demand for it failed to make clear just who could afford to use it. Nowadays Bell Labs would let the market determine whether it would develop a Picturephone.

Into the competitive world today Bell Labs' developers are bringing such impressive products as a gigantic computerized electronic switching system, which can cost several million dollars and handles up to 300,000 telephone calls an hour. Bell Labs is also helping install a system that will connect McDonald's 7500 hamburger outlets and the company's administrative offices. In all these activities Bell Labs' people think they have a competitive advantage because research has been integrated into the work of the parent company better than at any other industrial lab.

Just as it opened the new world of microelectronics by inventing the transistor, Bell Labs is now far along in harnessing the electron's ephemeral cousin, the photon, for the task of information movement and management. In Bell Labs' bag of surprises there even could be an optical computer superior to its electronic counterpart. Progress in that field in recent months has been exceptionally rapid. The optical computer, using laser beams instead of electrical connections, would work 1000 times faster than today's electronic variety—an almost unimaginable boon to everyone from theoretical physicists to weather forecasters.

Bell Labs' basic scientists insist that competition is nothing new for them, that they have always competed against the world at large. As Arno Penzias puts it, Bell Labs traditionally has been a place that "made its own future happen." ◆

A NEW APOLOGY FOR SOCRATES

By I.F. Stone

With a brilliant defense of free speech in a democratic society, a contemporary scholar and journalist wins the acquittal of Socrates.

In 399 B.C. Socrates stood trial for impiety and for corrupting the youth of Athens. The speech Socrates made to the 500-man jury, reconstructed by Plato in the Apology, *is a classic text of Greek literature and part of the canon of Western thought. But the speech did not convince the jury of Socrates' innocence. He was found guilty and sentenced to death by poisoning.*

In this article, journalist I.F. Stone analyzes the trial of Socrates and offers some thoughts on how it might have gone differently—how Socrates might have won acquittal. Studying the evidence of Athenian society and its values and using as his model the dialogues that have preserved Socrates' ideas for over 2000 years, Stone presents an eloquent defense of free speech in a context relevant to both Socrates' world and our own.

I.F. Stone was for many years the editor and publisher of I.F. Stone's Weekly, *a respected Washington newsletter. His work has appeared in a number of leading publications, including* Harper's Magazine, The Nation, *and* The New York Review of Books. *Now 81, Stone has taught himself ancient Greek in order to read and write about the lessons of classical Athens. "A New Apology for Socrates" is based on his most recent book,* The Trial of Socrates.

What is the most important discovery you have made about the trial of Socrates?

How easily he might have won acquittal.

What's your evidence?

To start with, the slim majority who voted for conviction.

What was the vote?

The vote of the jury was 280 for conviction, 220 for acquittal. So a shift of 30 votes—or six percent of the voters—would have created a tie, and in Athens a tie would set free the accused.

Was Socrates aware of this?

Of course. In Plato's *Apology*, he expresses his surprise at the narrowness of the verdict against him. "I did not expect so small a majority," he says, "but a large one."

Why was Socrates surprised?

Socrates clearly expected a large and decisive majority against him. I think he had good reason to be surprised by the close vote. His lifelong teaching had been consistently hostile to Athenian democracy. If the Athenian *demos*, the common people or the many, had been as benighted and biased as Socrates believed them to be, his case would indeed have been hopeless. But the closely divided jury shows that his case was not hopeless—that the jury was troubled about convicting him.

Why do you think the jury was troubled?

Because free expression permeated the political and artistic life of Athens and had made it—as Pericles boasted in Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*—"the school of Hellas." Philosophers from all over the Mediterranean world flocked to Athens to address its eager audiences. And what in truth had Socrates done? He denied that he had ever joined in any of the aristocratic conspiracies against the government of Athens or committed any overt act against it, and no evidence was offered to the contrary. He had done his duty bravely as a citizen soldier. He was indicted for what he said and taught: it was purely a prosecution of *ideas*, and therefore at odds with the city's most basic traditions. That is what must have trou-

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bled the Athenians then as it still troubles the modern reader now. Indeed, if the Athenians had not felt so strongly about free speech, they would not have waited until Socrates was 70 before taking him to court.

So what conclusion do you draw from this?

If Socrates had pleaded the right to free speech, if he had appealed to the fundamental principles of Athenian democracy, I believe he could have turned that closely divided jury to his favor and won acquittal.

Why didn't he do so?

Socrates didn't believe in free speech and he wanted to be convicted. There is evidence, of which too few are aware, that he wanted to die and set out deliberately to provoke the jury.

So where do you begin your retrial of the case?

With the fundamental divergence between the premises of Athenian democracy and the teachings of Socrates.

How do you describe them?

There were basic issues about which Socrates differed irreconcilably with his fellow citizens, and indeed with those of all but the most backward Greek areas. Socrates was not just antidemocratic. He was antipolitical in the Greek sense of the term. He did not approve of the *polis*, whether ruled by the many, as in the democracies, or the few, as in the oligarchies. He did not believe that people were capable of self-government: he saw the human community as a herd. A herd requires a shepherd as its master, and the herdsman does not consult his sheep.

What was the dominant Greek view?

Aristotle later summed this up best when he declared that man is a political animal, i.e., an animal that lives in a city-state or community, *koinonia*. Communal life is made possible because man, unlike the other animals, has *Logos*—the power of reasoned and persuasive speech. He can tell right from wrong and therefore is able to live peacefully with his fellows with sufficient respect for the opinions and rights of others to make the community viable. Aristotle said that the solitary man is either a savage or a god.

Socrates wanted to be convicted. There is evidence that he wanted to die and deliberately set out to provoke the jury.

The attaining of knowledge for him, as for most Greeks, was not a metaphysical wild goose chase for unattainable absolute definitions—for that is what Socrates was up to—but the steady accumulation of common wisdom distilled from common experience. Finally, Aristotle saw the city as the place where men could best achieve the good life, each fulfilling his individual capacities, whether as a tragic poet or a humble craftsman or, yes, as an endless and eternally charming talker like Socrates.

Who did Socrates believe should rule?

The ideal, indeed the only rational, ruler for Socrates, as expressed by him in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, was "the man who knows." This was, of course, the germ that Plato developed into the idea of rule by a philosopher-king.

Did Socrates ever think of running for public office as "the man who knows"?

The Delphic oracle, as Socrates boasted, said that no one was wiser than he. But Socrates spent his life demonstrating that he knew only that he *didn't* know, which put him one rung above all other Athenians, none of whom could meet his standard for real knowledge.

So that left the city with no qualified candidate?

Exactly.

So Socrates had nothing but contempt for the city-state?

Well, he did have a curious infatuation with Sparta, the great rival and enemy of Athens.

Why do you call it curious?

Because Sparta had no use for a Socrates. It was suspicious of foreigners and foreign ideas. It was a dour military state where members of the ruling class led a barracks existence of constant military training. They were a minority holding down their human herd of serfs, the helots, who cultivated their fields. Traders and craftsmen, members of the middle class—which in Athens was the most dynamic element in society—led a stunted and barely tolerated existence on the fringes of Spartan life, and were denied the rights of citizenship. Sparta was devoid of philosophers and artists. It never had a Parthenon or a theater. It had one or two poets, but these were famous mostly for war songs. Sparta and Crete were the cultural deserts of ancient Greece. Yet we know from Plato's *Crito* that Socrates admired these militaristic oligarchies. Just why is never explained.

Did such crotchety views bother the Athenians?

Yes, because the idealization of Sparta was characteristic of the young, wealthy, disaffected aristocrats who hated democracy and were both contemptuous and envious of the traders and craftsmen who were achieving wealth and contesting the political primacy of the old landed gentry. Socrates, though himself middle class, the son of a stonecutter, became the idol of the disdainful and alienated young aristocrats in Athens—Plato and Xenophon among them.

In the last decade and a half of the life of Socrates, these young aristocrats—in the wake of Athenian military defeats and with the connivance of the Spartans—twice overthrew the democracy and became the bully boys, the hit squads of rapacious dictatorships. Life, liberty and property were never as insecure in Athens as under these two antidemocratic regimes. The first overthrow was in 411 B.C. The second, instigated in 404 B.C. by a group called The Thirty, was led by Critias and Charmides, relatives of Plato and former students of Socra-



Metropolitan Museum of Art, Wolfe Fund, 1931. Catharine Lorillard Wolfe Fund Collection.

"Death of Socrates," by Jacques Louis David, 1787.

If a society is conscious of an idea, it will have a word for it. The ancient Greeks had no fewer than four terms for free speech.

tes. They appear as honored figures in the Platonic dialogues. This rebellious fringe of Athenian society made a third but unsuccessful attempt to overthrow the democracy again in 402 B.C., just three years before the trial of Socrates.

These three events shattered the confidence of the Athenians and made them less tolerant. But for this, Socrates would never have been brought to trial.

What did Socrates do the second time the democracy was overthrown, during the reign of The Thirty?

There was a struggle against The Thirty, and Socrates might have made himself a hero of the resistance if he had spoken against their rule or fled the city to join the opposition. Instead he stood above the battle, neither supporting nor opposing the dictators.

But didn't Xenophon in his *Memorabilia*—or *Memoirs of Socrates*—picture Socrates as at odds with Critias and The Thirty?

True, but that opposition was minimal and private. Socrates refused to take part in the arrest of the wealthy resident alien Leon of Salamis. Leon was only one of many such people whom the dictators executed without trial in order to seize their property. The Thirty used Leon's property to pay the expenses of the Spartan garrison, which had occupied Athens and kept the dictators in power.

Wasn't that praiseworthy as civil disobedience?

It was, but Socrates would have fared better at his trial—indeed I believe he would never have been indicted—if he had done more. If he had warned Leon of the danger, if he had made a public protest, if he—the lifelong teacher of virtue—had denounced these immoral and illegal acts, and especially if he had left the city to join the opposition. But throughout the conflict, he stayed in the city.

Why do you emphasize the phrase "stayed in the city"?

Under the amnesty that followed the restoration of democracy, no one except the oligarchic rulers could be prosecuted for anything he had done or failed to do before and during the dictatorship. But we know from legal pleadings in the following generation that to have "stayed in the city" during the conflict was regarded as shameful and could be used to prejudice the jury.

You mentioned earlier that Socrates deliberately set out to turn the jury

The test of truly free speech is not whether what is said or taught conforms to any rule or ruler, few or many. It is the freedom to disagree that constitutes freedom of speech.

against him. Where is the proof of this?

The evidence is in Xenophon's *Apology*. Unlike Plato's *Apology*, Xenophon's is not a masterpiece and is therefore little read. It is sketchy and seems to have been written soon after the trial. But Xenophon's plain and hasty account tells us things that Plato prefers to veil.

What does Xenophon add to the story?

Xenophon says that everybody who wrote about the trial was surprised at the tone Socrates took in his own defense and felt that it could only serve to provoke a conviction.

Does Xenophon agree?

He agrees that the way Socrates handled his defense was hardly calculated to obtain an acquittal. But he says this should not have occasioned surprise because Socrates wanted to die.

If you reread Plato's *Apology*, *Crito* and *Phaedo* after reading Xenophon, you will see that Plato's version, though more subtle, dovetails with Xenophon's.

Give us an example.

What most antagonized the jury, as reported in both Plato and Xenophon, was Socrates' claim that the oracle at Delphi had termed him the wisest of men, as Xenophon puts it, or as Plato more enigmatically treats it, that no one was wiser than Socrates. In his *Apology*, Plato says that there was a *thorubos*, an angry outcry from the jury, when Socrates said this. Socrates felt it necessary to deny that he was boasting.

Is there evidence elsewhere in Plato to support Xenophon?

Yes. In the *Crito*, after the trial, Socrates' disciples complain that he mishandled his defense. Later in the *Phaedo* they even suggest that he seems to have been bent on a kind of suicide.

How does Socrates answer that charge?

By an implicit admission. Socrates responds with a lovely but essentially nonsensical mystical discourse in which he argues that the philosopher should seek death as fulfillment because only in death is the soul freed from the body and able at last to contemplate the eternal and unchangeable Ideas. The *Phaedo* becomes a paean to death. It is a beautiful dialogue. And it certainly does not deny that in a sense Socrates gave himself the hemlock.

But are you not skipping ahead in the trial?

True. An Athenian trial had two phases. First the jury had to vote on whether to convict or not, and then on the penalty. Under Athenian procedure, the prosecution proposed one penalty and the defense another. The jury could not "split the difference": it had to choose one or the other. The prosecution proposed the death penalty. Then Socrates went on to antagonize the jury again by proposing counter-penalties the jury could hardly take seriously.

In Athens, civic heroes and other distinguished persons were honored with free meals at the city hall. Socrates suggested that as his penalty he be given free meals there for the rest of his life. When this created an uproar of disapproval, he proposed a trivial fine. Only at last and too late, after appeals from Plato and other disciples that they were ready to put up the money, did he offer to pay a substantial fine. But by then the jury was too furious: it voted for the death penalty. It is worth knowing that the vote for the death penalty was much larger than the original vote for conviction. Many who had been ready to acquit now voted for death.

How do you think Socrates should have handled his defense? What would you have advised if you had been his lawyer?

Actually Athens did not have lawyers in our sense. Litigants could hire speechwriters; Demosthenes was the most famous of them. Socrates didn't need one. He was the cleverest arguer in town and quite capable of a successful defense if he had wanted one.

Still, how would you have liked Socrates to handle his case?

I believe Socrates was unjustly accused, that no overt acts against the city were even alleged much less proven, that this was purely a prosecution for opinion—for what he had said and taught in the last few years of his life. As such it violated the city's most precious principles. Free speech was the very basis of its democracy, of the debates in the assembly where the laws were made, and in the jury courts in which those laws were interpreted. Free speech made possible the masterpieces, tragic and comic, of the Athenian theater—still among the wonders of world literature. I think that Socrates could have swung that narrow six percent margin for conviction to acquittal if he had argued a defense based on freedom of speech.

But what makes you think that Athenians were conscious of free speech as a basic principle of government?

If a society is conscious of an idea, it will have a word for it. The Romans had no free speech in our sense and they had no word for it. But the ancient Greeks had no less than four terms for free speech. That is more than in any other language.

What were those four words?

The oldest, first encountered in Aeschylus, is compounded from the words for free, *eleutheros*, and mouth, *stomos*. The second turns up first in Herodotus, who made his history a prose epic in celebration of democracy, an account of the struggle of Greek democracy—especially Athenian—against Persian despotism. That word is *isegoria*, which etymologically means an equal right to speak in the assembly. It thus became a synonym for political equality.

What were the other two?

The next was *parrhasia*, a word believed to be of specific Athenian coinage. Its earliest appearance, as far as we can tell, is in the plays of Euripides. It referred to both that frankness on which the Athenians prided themselves and their right to free speech as citizens of a free city. It was a flag-waver of a word for Athenian audiences. Milton used a passage from Euripides at the very beginning of his *Areopagitica*, the noblest defense of a free press in modern times. How effectively Socrates might have used lines from Euripides to sway his jury for acquittal!

And what was the fourth?

Isologia, which means an equal right to speak. It appears in the history written by Polybius and has a special meaning for Americans. Polybius was the historian of the Achaean League, the first successful federal government in history, and the Framers of the American Constitution looked to Polybius for inspiration in establishing the U.S. federal system. Polybius attributes the stability and survival of this Greek federation—long after Greek freedom had been crushed elsewhere by Macedonian and Roman armies—to the fact that an equal right to speak, *isologia*, existed within the member cities and in their federal assembly or congress.

So how, specifically, if Socrates had wanted an acquittal, should he have argued his case?

If I had been his speechwriter, I would have had him say this:

"Men of Athens, fellow citizens, this is not a trial of Socrates but of ideas, and therefore of Athens. You are not prosecuting me for any unlawful or impious act against our city or its altars. No such evidence has been brought against me.

"You are not prosecuting me for anything I did, but for what I have said and taught. You are threatening me with death because you do not like my views and my teaching. This is a prosecution of ideas, and that is something new in our city's history. In this sense, Athens is in the dock, not Socrates. Each of you, as my judges, is a defendant.

"Let me be frank. I do not believe in your so-called freedom of speech, but you do. I believe the opinions of ordinary men are only *doxa*—beliefs without substance, pale shadows of reality, not to be taken seriously, and likely only to lead a city astray.

"I think it absurd to encourage the free utterance of unfounded irrational opinions, or to base civic policy on a count of heads, like cabbages. Hence I do not believe in democracy. But you do. This is your test, not mine.

Ideas are not as fragile as men. They cannot be made to drink hemlock. Socrates knew that his ideas—and his example—would survive him and that Athens would wear the stain of his death.

"Your freedom of speech is based on the assumption that every man's opinion is of value, and that the many are better guides than the few. But how can you boast of your free speech if you suppress mine? How can you listen to the shoemaker's or the tanner's views when you debate justice in the assembly, but shut me up when I express mine?

"You are proud that the gates of Athens have been opened to philosophers from all over Greece and even the outer barbarian world. Will you now execute one of your own because suddenly you cannot stand to hear an unpopular opinion? It is not I but you who will be disgraced forever by my condemnation.

"You say my ideas have been corrupting the youth and leading them to question the democracy. You say that I was Critias's teacher. You are acting as if you had become his pupils.

"The Thirty were arbitrary and did as they pleased. You claim to be men who live by the law. Are you not acting like them? Tell me, now, by what law of Athens do you seek to restrict philosophic teaching? Where can I find it among the city's statutes? When was it debated and voted? Who proposed such a monstrosity, as you yourselves—in calmer days and in your right minds—would have termed it?

"The test of truly free speech is not whether what is said or taught conforms to any rule or ruler, few or many. Even under the worst dictator, it is not forbidden to agree with him. It is the freedom to disagree that constitutes freedom of speech. This has been the Athenian rule until now, the pride of our city, the glory on which your orators dwell. Will you turn your backs on it now?

"You say I have shown disrespect for the city's gods. Beware lest you make yourselves guilty of that very offense in condemning me. How can you honor Peitho—our civic goddess of persuasion—when persuasion is inhibited, and nonconformist thoughts prosecuted? Are you not disobeying Zeus Agoraios, the patron deity of free debate in the assembly, when you restrict debate by condemning me?

"Ideas are not as fragile as men. They cannot be made to drink hemlock. My ideas—and my example—will survive me. But the good name of Athens will wear a stain forever if you violate its traditions by convicting me. The shame will be yours, not mine."

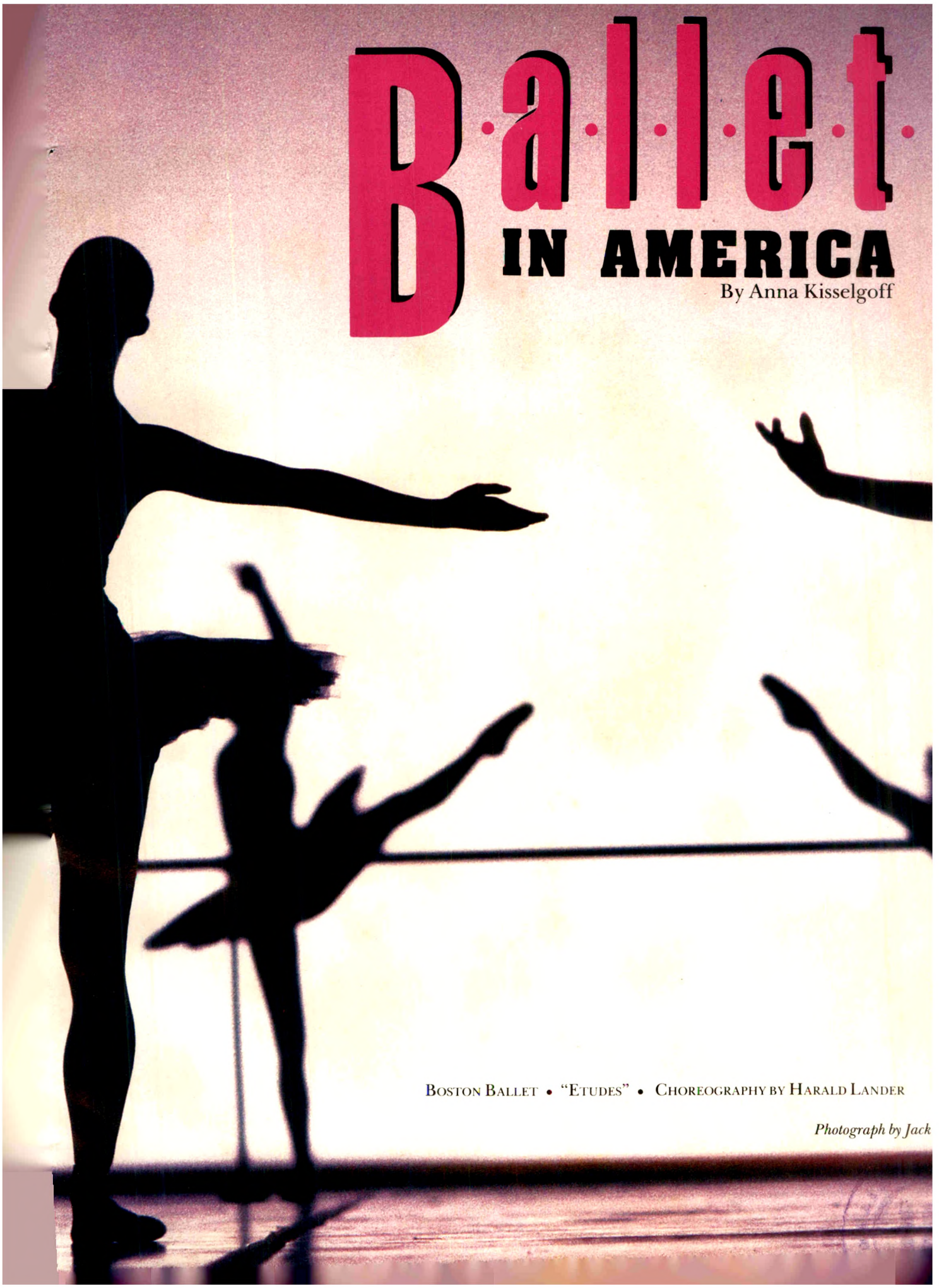
You would have challenged them with a compliment?

Right. Had Socrates invoked freedom of speech as a basic right *of all Athenians*, he would have struck a deep and responsive chord. And I believe that the jury would have set him free. ♦



Ballet IN AMERICA

By Anna Kisselgoff



BOSTON BALLET • "ETUDES" • CHOREOGRAPHY BY HARALD LANDER

Photograph by Jack

Early in the present century touring troupes of European dancers provided U.S. audiences with their first widespread exposure to classical ballet. By the 1930s—when the first native ballet companies were founded—this codified, highly formal art with its origins in European court dances was beginning to assume a distinctively American form. In a famous 1938 manifesto Lincoln Kirstein, the founder of the New York City Ballet along with the Russian-émigré choreographer George Balanchine, defined the emerging "American style" in dance as "a style bred from basketball courts, track and swimming meets and junior proms....It is frank, open, fresh and friendly. It can be funny without seeming arch, and serious without seeming pained." In this essay, dance critic Anna Kisselgoff traces the development of American ballet from its origins to the present, a time when the original wave of creative giants like Balanchine is being replaced by a new generation of artistic leaders. Following her article, a photo essay captures the elegance and energy of the best of today's ballet companies.

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In the 1980s American ballet celebrates a half century of existence. This decade finds the art form both at a peak of popularity and in a state of transition. If the 1930s constituted a pioneering decade, a time when a handful of visionaries were determined to see ballet take root in a country with no classical dance tradition, the '60s and '70s saw American ballet receive unprecedented international recognition and acceptance at home. A common feeling of the past—that ballet was an imported European art form—would astound today's young dancers, especially those who have represented the United States at the International Ballet Competition in Moscow. This same competition has been held more than once in America—in Jackson, Mississippi.

Moreover, the "dance boom" of the last 20 years has witnessed the establishment of new professional ballet companies in major cities across the nation. Revivals of 19th- and 20th-century ballets are performed side by side with a plethora of premieres by American choreographers, some of whom move freely between the idiom of classical ballet and the nonballetic tradition of modern dance. Unlike companies abroad, American ballet troupes focus strongly on the genre of nonnarrative ballet exemplified for more than 40 years by the late George Balanchine, the New York City Ballet's founding artistic director and chief choreographer.

Despite the increase in audiences, most observers would argue that quality rather than popularity has been the distinguishing feature of American ballet. The case is easy to make simply because the art form in the United States has been shaped largely by the creativity and esthetic influence of three of the internationally acknowledged giants. As choreographers, George Balanchine, Antony Tudor (who died in 1987) and Jerome Robbins, by general consent, have had few peers elsewhere in the field (Britain's Frederick Ashton would be ranked on the same level). Each was associated with either of the country's two leading ballet organizations—the New York City Ballet or American Ballet Theatre (ABT)—for the major portion of his career, but each also choreographed for the other company.

Characteristically, these three choreographers achieved recognition not only for the quality of their work but also for their innovations, especially their success in changing the way spectators looked at dance. American ballet thus continues, in part, to be marked by the terse psychological dance-dramas that Tudor introduced into ABT's repertory when he arrived from his native England to join the company as a founding choreographer in 1939. Robbins's works, first performed in the early 1940s at ABT (where he was a dancer) and now mainly seen at the New York City Ballet (which he joined in 1949), have had an experimental look expressive of their times.

Balanchine, frequently ranked with Picasso and Stravinsky, dominated the American scene after the 1950s. Through his unswerving insistence on the primacy of dance values, he taught Americans to accept plotless ballets rather than the theatrical narrative productions like Ashton's *Cinderella*, which were popular abroad. Balanchine asked audiences to concentrate on choreography and dancing rather than program notes and production values, to appreciate dance for dance's sake and, more specifically, to accept the academic idiom in which he worked while rejecting the idiosyncratic movement sources of other dance forms.

Balanchine's death in 1983 signaled the end of an era. Those who had given American ballet its unprecedented permanency were no longer young. Lincoln Kirstein, cofounder of the New York City Ballet with Balanchine and still its general director, was born in 1907. The still-productive Robbins was born in 1918, making him considerably older than Peter Martins when he and the Danish-born dancer (born in 1947) were jointly named to succeed Balanchine as artistic directors of the New York City Ballet. Lucia Chase, the founding patron of Ballet Theatre (renamed American Ballet Theatre when it toured abroad in 1957), died in 1986, six years after relinquishing her position as artistic director to the Soviet-born dancer Mikhail Baryshnikov. America's third major ballet company suffered an unexpected loss

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Balanchine's arrival from Europe in 1933 was perhaps the key event in the Americanization of the art form. Americans were capable of becoming excellent classical dancers, he was to prove.

when Robert Joffrey, who founded the Joffrey Ballet in 1956 and was its artistic director, died in the spring of 1988 at the age of 57.

These events have clearly left American ballet in a state of flux. The country's three leading ballet troupes, all based in New York, have found themselves bereft of the personalities who provided each group with its artistic profile. Although it is too early to speak of major shifts in artistic policies, the trend has been toward an institutionalization of ballet, to make the artistic direction of a company less dependent upon the vision of a single figure. The result is often an increased role by a company's board of trustees—a recent addition to the dance world—in the ballet company's operations. This pattern was already evident in the 1970s in the regional companies outside New York. Boards, in the name of fiscal responsibility, began to assert greater control over artistic matters.

The major question facing American ballet in the late 1980s and beyond, then, is to what extent institutionalization will affect artistic policy. The issues were very different when the American ballet movement was in its infancy in the 1930s. Although ballet dancers from Europe had toured the United States in the 18th and 19th centuries, it was impossible to speak of a native ballet tradition. By the 20th century, civic fathers interested in local prestige were beginning to found opera companies and symphony orchestras. But their unfamiliarity with ballet as a higher art form, along with a puritanical heritage that frowned upon display of the human body on stage, prevented the establishment of ballet companies in the same period.

The impact of touring Russian ballet troupes with their dazzling star appeal did much to change the situation. The famous ballerina Anna Pavlova arrived for the first of many visits in 1910, followed in 1916 by Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. Mikhail Mordkin, Pavlova's partner, settled later in New York, where he was Lucia Chase's teacher and formed a small group that became the nucleus of Ballet Theatre in 1940. Diaghilev's dancers and other alumni of Russia's Imperial Ballet such as Michel Fokine scattered throughout the country as teachers. Agnes de Mille, choreographer of *Rodeo* (1942), the quintessential American ballet of that era, studied with Russian and Italian teachers.

The impetus for a native American ballet movement thus dates from the 1930s, when dancers and choreographers with no outlet for their talent as well as visionary lovers of ballet such as Lincoln Kirstein acted to fill the vacuum around them. Ruth Page founded her first Chicago company in 1934, choreographing typical ballets like *Hear Ye! Hear Ye!*, a courtroom drama about a murder, set to music by Aaron Copland. The Littlefield Ballet, formed in 1935 in Philadelphia by Catherine Littlefield, was the first American ballet company to perform in Europe.

In 1933, the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo arrived for its first American tour. Organized in Europe as the successor company to Diaghilev's troupe after the Russian impresario died in 1929, the new Ballet Russe soon began to recruit American dancers. By the time of its demise in 1963, it was American-based and its American dancers no longer felt compelled to Russianize their names in order to enhance their appeal at the box office. It was in the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo that *Rodeo* had its premiere. Touring year after year, the Ballet Russe—with its mix of Diaghilev favorites, new works and bits of the classics—provided an introduction to ballet for audiences throughout the country. Years later, Robert Joffrey would restage several of the 20th-century classics he remembered from having seen the Ballet Russe while growing up in Seattle.

Balanchine's arrival from Europe in 1933 at Kirstein's invitation was perhaps the key event in the Americanization of the art form. It led to the establishment of the School of American Ballet and eventually to the New York City Ballet in 1948. A second catalyst was the founding of Ballet Theatre in 1940 by Richard Pleasant, with Lucia Chase as chief patron and also a dancer in the company.

Paradoxically, native-born directors like Pleasant, Chase and Littlefield included such 19th-century Russian classics as *The Sleeping Beauty* or similar dances in their repertories. It was Balanchine, Russian-born and Diaghilev's last choreographer, who announced that his new American company was predicated on distinguished music and new works in the classical idiom, not the standard repertory of the past. The language of classical ballet was international and enduring and could be extended into contemporary terms. Just as Americans were capable of becoming outstanding classical musicians, they also could become excellent classical dancers, he was to prove. Advocating the cause of a new American ballet as opposed to the so-called Russian ballet of the Monte Carlo troupe, Kirstein argued that the issue was one of style and technique. The attack and energy of Balanchine's dancers, Kirstein said, were recognizably American, imbued with the spirit of American athleticism rather than the tradition of court ballet.

For many others, however, ballet could be American only if it dealt with American themes. The mural art of the New Deal, with its emphasis on nation building, found its echo in American modern dance, a personalized form of choreographic expression that was also emerging in the 1930s. Choreographers of modern dance rejected ballet as aristocratic and removed from American life. From Martha Graham, the presiding genius of the modern-dance movement, on down, they concentrated on open-frontier

optimism or social-protest pieces with titles like *Dustbowl Ballads*.

Ballet, it is true, was not immune from these currents. In collaboration with choreographer Eugene Loring in the late 1930s, Lincoln Kirstein's Ballet Caravan troupe mythologized not only the Wild West in *Billy the Kid*, but also the common man. Lew Christensen's *Filling Station*, a Ballet Caravan work about a gas-station attendant, is still performed in the San Francisco Ballet just as *Billy the Kid* has been in the recent repertory of ABT and other companies.

If the arts as a whole were marked by a strong nationalism in the 1930s, the '40s produced a new generation of ballet choreographers who advocated the use of American material largely in reaction to the Russian ballets in which they found themselves cast as dancers. Jerome Robbins stated the case in 1945: "Ballet as first performed in this country was generated for the most part in an atmosphere of careful seclusion and of detachment from the world around it" and it was "greeted as exotic, expressive, elegant."

Robbins added: "That ballet has taken fast root in this country is obvious. Today's choreographer gathers his material from experiences common to the majority of people rather than from fantasy and fairy tales....Dancers want to dance material they know and understand and they want to bring this understanding to larger audiences." Finally, he urged that ballet experiment with "other theater forms" in order to obtain "a wider horizon," concluding that "the ballet, old as the royal courts of Europe, is a young art in America. Its future is one of uninhibited expansion."

Robbins was writing with the exultation of a novice choreographer who had scored an instant hit the previous year with his first ballet, *Fancy Free*. Set to Leonard Bernstein's first ballet score, this now-classic work about three sailors on leave and dancing in Times Square during World War II, epitomized American ballet as Robbins then saw it. The composer and choreographer, both Americans, incor-

PENNSYLVANIA AND MILWAUKEE BALLET • "CARMINA BURANA" BY JOHN BUTLER



porated the vernacular into the music and the dancing; the ballet was unmistakably American in its social attitudes and dance rhythms.

Robbins, who went on to direct Broadway musicals before returning to classical dance with the New York City Ballet, would be the first today to acknowledge that the literalism of this point of view was a passing phase. After 1969, he turned to more abstract choreography inspired by classical music. In a sense, his 1988 work for the New York City Ballet, *Ives, Songs*, joins the two strands of his career: it is a nostalgic look at early-20th-century America through the music of Charles Ives, but its steps are more abstract than those of *Fancy Free*.

The compulsion to create out of familiar material is still present among younger ballet choreographers like Eliot Feld, who was born in 1942. Like Robbins, Feld was catapulted to prominence with the first ballet he choreographed while still a dancer with ABT. He then left to form his own company. The Feld Ballet, based in New York since 1974, is made up of classically trained dancers and, for the most part, Feld remains interested in classical technique. Yet, like Robbins, he will use any movement necessary to his purpose, as in *Over the Pavement*, a 1982 study of the down-and-out.

The Feld Ballet remains primarily a creative instrument for its choreographer-director, although the company has also staged revivals like Bronislava Nijinska's *Les Noces* and works by a few modern-dance choreographers. In the last few years, Feld has startled his audience by creating several pieces without any recognizable ballet vocabulary to contemporary composer Steve Reich's minimalist music. The dancers wear sneakers and move up and down on ramps in repetitive patterns; in *Medium: Rare*, the soloist jumps off a small trampoline.

Feld's eclectic training allows him to create his own modern-dance pieces. But the overriding trend in the 1980s has been for ballet companies to invite guest choreographers from modern dance. The recent vogue for this sort of "cross-

Photograph by Steven Caras



over" work dates from the 1973 premiere of Twyla Tharp's *Deuce Coupe*, set to songs by the popular rock group the Beach Boys, for the Joffrey Ballet. Tharp's collage style of choreographing unrelated phrases proved successful with the versatile Joffrey company, for which she created two other works. Encouraged to draw more heavily upon the ballet vocabulary, she then choreographed *Push Comes to Shove* in 1976 for Baryshnikov and ABT, a popular work that introduced her to wider audiences. Tharp is the most skilled of the crossover choreographers from modern dance who work in ballet troupes. Baryshnikov appeared in her short ballet, *Once Upon a Time*, and a show-business piece, *Sinatra Suite*, at ABT, and she eventually created a genuine and fine neoclassical ballet, *Bach Partita*, in 1983. Tharp followed this up by collaborating with Robbins on *Brahms/Handel* for the New York City Ballet. These works showed Tharp clearly altering her idiosyncratic idiom, replacing it with the standard ballet vocabulary, although she uses the steps with her characteristic quirkiness.

The crossover phenomenon, however, would seem to have its limitations. Tharp, for instance, remains a modern-dance choreographer in outlook, eager to explore new movements that exist outside classical ballet's highly codified idiom and thus outside a ballet dancer's training. And modern-dance choreographers without experience as dancers in ballet companies have yet to show in-depth knowledge of the ballet vocabulary. These distinctions are not negligible; the difference between the two forms remains rooted not only in viewpoint but chiefly in whether or not the academic idiom of ballet is the basic grammar of movement.

Nonetheless, the 1980s have seen an influx of modern-dance choreographers both in and outside New York. Such newcomers as Mark Morris created works for the Joffrey, ABT and the Boston Ballet. Lucinda Childs, who often uses minimalist composers like Philip Glass, choreographed for the Pacific Northwest Ballet in Seattle, and Karole Armitage, formerly of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, created *The Mollino Room* for ABT. David Gordon, who was a founding member of the avant-garde Judson Dance Theater in New York in 1962, used everyday movement in *Field, Chair and Mountain* and a recited text in *Murder* for ABT. He also choreographed *Piano Movers* for the Dance Theatre of Harlem. Laura Dean was especially successful at retaining her signature style—which involves repetitive trancelike patterns and spinning dances. After receiving acclaim for *Night* in 1980 with the Joffrey, she created two other works for the company including the large ensemble piece *Force Field*.

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In the current era, with its changeover from founding directors to newly appointed successors, the New York City Ballet, American Ballet Theatre and the Joffrey serve as models for other American companies.

The final twist is that some of these modern-dance choreographers have now tried to convert their own groups into ballet troupes. Tharp has even accepted a position with ABT as a resident choreographer, dissolving her own company and taking six dancers to the ballet company. This was hardly the result intended by the National Choreography Project, a recent program financed by the federal government's National Endowment for the Arts, Exxon Corporation and the Rockefeller Foundation. Designed to introduce choreographers into companies with which they had not worked, the project offered financial stimulus to have modern-dance choreographers work for ballet troupes, and it happened to coincide with complaints of ballet directors like Baryshnikov that choreographers in ballet are less creative today than those in modern dance.

This complaint is a common one, and it may be true up to a point. First-rank choreographers in modern dance who are still active include Martha Graham, Paul Taylor, Merce Cunningham, Alvin Ailey, Alwin Nikolais and Erick Hawkins. However, except for Cunningham, who now uses ballet steps in a stylized way, none was involved in the National Choreography Project. The question is whether ballet has benefited from an involvement with some of the second-level choreographers it has invited into its precincts.

Companies like the Dance Theatre of Harlem, founded in 1969 by Arthur Mitchell after he retired as a principal dancer with the New York City Ballet, did participate in the project but achieved more success recently with a shrewd choice of revivals. Mitchell founded his company to provide greater opportunities in classical ballet for black dancers, the majority of whom had gone into modern dance. While the overall style of the company resembles that of the New York City Ballet, Mitchell has also revealed the dramatic gifts of his young dancers in revivals of dance-dramas, such as Agnes de Mille's *Fall River Legend* and Michel Fokine's *Schéhérazade*. A particularly innovative recent production was Dance Theatre of Harlem's *Giselle*, set not in the usual German countryside but in the society of freed slaves and property owners in 19th-century Louisiana. The choreography was traditional, but the decor and costumes suggested the land of the bayou.

The American company that has consistently produced the most unusual and distinguished revivals is the Joffrey Ballet. Robert Joffrey, through his meticulous research, rescued from oblivion many works that generations of balletgoers had not seen. He concentrated on the avant-

garde of the past, with the first authentic revival since 1926 of *Parade*, a landmark work created in 1917 by Picasso, Jean Cocteau, Erik Satie and the choreographer Leonide Massine, who supervised the revival's staging. Vaslav Nijinsky's *L'Après-midi d'un faune* and *Le Sacre du printemps* were among other reconstructions.

A choreographer himself, Joffrey preferred to encourage younger talent such as Tharp and Dean. Joffrey's successor and the company's resident choreographer, Gerald Arpino continues to develop the company's exuberant contemporary image, today furthered by excellent young dancers like Tina LeBlanc and Edward Stierle.

In the current transitional era, with its changeover from founding directors to newly appointed successors, it is still clear that the New York City Ballet, ABT and the Joffrey often serve as models for other American companies. Since the United States is a nation of immigrants, it is not unusual for the two largest ballet troupes to be headed by male stars trained in Europe. Peter Martins, who codirects the New York City Ballet and supervises its day-to-day policies, is a product of the Royal Danish Ballet, which he left in 1970 for the American company. Baryshnikov, born in 1948, was the star of the Kirov Ballet before he joined ABT in 1974. In 1978 and '79, he spent 15 months dancing with the New York City Ballet until suffering an injury; he returned to ABT as its director in 1980.

The New York City Ballet continues Balanchine's emphasis on creative new works within the ballet tradition, chiefly works by Martins and Robbins. Earlier Robbins works have also entered the current repertory. The 1945 *Interplay* shows a more innocent America than *Moods* with its hints of 1950s alienation. The 1980 *Gershwin Concerto* is a more recent example of Robbins's masterful ability to sum up the spirit of American urban life. Some of his most experimental works are his most successful. In the 1983 *Glass Pieces* he used Philip Glass's minimalist music, as modern-dance choreographers like Laura Dean and Lucinda Childs have, but rejected their reduced vocabulary, working instead with the classical idiom. Here, as in most of his works, Robbins continued to further the art of ballet partnering, extending its technical range.

Nearly two-thirds of the New York City Ballet's repertory is still made up of works by Balanchine, who remains a model for younger choreographers in the company such as Bart Cook. Balanchine's emphasis on speed, innovative partnering and recombinations of academic steps are crucial to Martins's own ballets. As a novice choreographer under Balanchine's tutelage in the late 1970s, Martins struck some as being more cerebral than his mentor. While working openly in the Balanchine mold, he has lately found more of his own voice, most notably in plotless ballets set to baroque music such as Mozart's *Les Petits Riens*. Martins's *Ecstatic Orange*, a contrasting hard-edged ballet to music by a young American composer, Michael Torke, testifies to the movement invention that makes Martins the best of the new neoclassical choreographers in America.

Martins has maintained the company's high standards of technique for dancers, with ballerinas like Kyra Nichols, Darci Kistler and Maria Calegari especially coming to the fore. After Martins and Helgi Tomasson, another of the company's longtime dancers, retired from dancing in the 1980s, the City Ballet tradition of great male dancing suffered a lapse. In recent years, however, a new generation of fine classical dancers has emerged in the male ensemble.

ABT, for its part, continues its traditional eclectic programming. Baryshnikov himself dances only rarely with the company. As the star of three films related to dance (*The Turning Point*, *White Nights*, *Dancers*) and through his annual summer tours with a small group of ABT dancers, he nonetheless continues to introduce a mass audience to ballet. Baryshnikov insists correctly that no company should depend upon a single star, and he has concentrated on promoting a cluster of young dancers—Susan Jaffe, Cheryl Yeager, Bonnie Moore and Amanda McKerrow, who in 1981 became the first American to win a gold medal at the Moscow Ballet Competition. The male ranks are headed by Kevin McKenzie and include the very promising Wes Chapman and the popular young Argentine virtuoso Julio Bocca.

Although Baryshnikov's programming has made room for an increased number of Antony Tudor revivals, new productions or premieres by Kenneth MacMillan of Britain's Royal Ballet, 19th-century classics and works by Tharp and others, the recent addition of 10 Balanchine ballets led to charges that he was trying to "Balanchinize" the company. As a whole, however, ABT repertory is more varied than the New York City Ballet's and the two companies remain distinct.

Beyond his ballets, Balanchine left a rich legacy in America in the form of his ex-dancers. The important companies outside New York are nearly all directed by Balanchine alumni. These include Helgi Tomasson, San Francisco Ballet; Robert Weiss, Pennsylvania and Milwaukee Ballet; Patricia Wilde, Pittsburgh Ballet Theater; Kent Stowell, Pacific Northwest Ballet; Robert Barnett, Atlanta Ballet; Edward Villella, Miami City Ballet; John Clifford, Ballet of Los Angeles; and Daniel Duell, Chicago City Ballet.

ABT's alumni include Bruce Marks, Boston Ballet; Ivan Nagy, Cincinnati/New Orleans Ballet; Dennis Nahat, Cleveland/San Jose Ballet. A few major regional companies are headed by Europeans. Alumni of Britain's Royal Ballet are Ben Stevenson, Houston Ballet; Alun Jones, Louisville Ballet; John Hart, Ballet West in Salt Lake City. As indicated by their names, some of these companies are now based in two cities in an effort to broaden their financial support. The Joffrey Ballet led the way in 1983 when it called itself "bicoastal," established regular seasons in Los Angeles and acquired a separate board of directors in that city.

As expected, the repertory in each regional company is influenced by its director's background. The Balanchine alumni tend to include his ballets or are choreographers who work in his style. One major company outside this fold is the Washington Ballet

in the nation's capital, directed by Mary Day. It was this troupe that promoted the career of Choo San Goh, a choreographer from Singapore who died in 1987 and whose prolific output caused his ballets to enter the repertory of many companies throughout the United States. Goh generally worked in a plotless neoclassic vein, but his use of an emotional subtext does not recall Balanchine. ABT, the Joffrey, Dance Theatre of Harlem, Boston Ballet, along with the Washington Ballet, are among the troupes that have presented his premieres.

While there is considerable diversity among these regional companies, one major issue looms over the future of the art form. The state of ballet in the United States is symbolized today by the very names of the companies. Kirstein and Balanchine were still making the case for American ballet in general when they called their first company the American Ballet in 1935. When Ballet Theatre went abroad, it changed its name to American Ballet Theatre. Ballet has evolved since then, and today a ballet company is named after a city and for reasons of prestige and funding, governed by a board of local civic leaders.

It is rare nowadays to see a creative figure like Balanchine form a ballet company as a means of personal expression. The current ballet directors, hired by a board of directors, are generally one generation beyond their company founders. Even Baryshnikov speaks of himself jokingly as an employee, a remark that indirectly reflects an important fact—namely, that ballet is now a part of the American way of life.

Cora Cahan, the executive director of the Feld Ballet, posed the key issue—how to sustain a great creative tradition—at a recent conference on the future of American dance when she said: "The dance world is changing right in front of our eyes. There will be vast shifts in the next 12 years. Each performance is like a sunset—dance is an ephemeral art. The whole point here is that we do have roots we value. How do we hold on to them and grow?" ♦

Ballet
A PORTFOLIO
The Dancer and the Dance

One of George Balanchine's virtues as a choreographer, said dance critic Edward Denby, was his skill at teaching Americans "how to look grand and noble, but not be embarrassed about it." The dancers on these pages, selected from five of the country's best companies, certainly uphold that ideal. While ballet remains the most international of performing arts, the era when dancers like Nijinsky and Pavlova presented an exotic import to U.S. audiences is long past. Today's homegrown superstars are exemplified by Amanda McKerrow (right), who became the first American to win a gold medal at the International Ballet Competition in Moscow and is now an acclaimed ballerina with American Ballet Theatre.

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AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE • AMANDA MCKERROW • "THE LEAVES ARE FADING" BY ANTONY TUDOR



Photograph by Jack Mitchell

"THE SLEEPING BEAUTY" • RECREATED BY KENNETH MACMILLAN



American Ballet Theatre

Ready to celebrate its half-century mark in 1990, the American Ballet Theatre is, according to critic Alan Kriegsman, "still setting the standard." Perhaps the most eclectic of ballet companies, ABT from the beginning has aimed to become a "museum of dance...to show at least one masterpiece from each of the greater periods." Thus, the company has been well known for its elegant rejuvenations of such 19th-century spectacles as "The Sleeping Beauty." Yet ABT helped usher in the contemporary era of ballet with the spare psychological dance-dramas of its longtime choreographer Antony Tudor. Under its current director, the great dancer Mikhail Baryshnikov, ABT has also become a leader in commissioning "crossover" works by avant-garde choreographers from modern dance.

Photograph by Tom Brazil



AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE • MARIANNA TCHERKASSKY
"GISELLE" BY JEAN CORALLI AND JULES PERROT



Photograph by Jack Mitchell

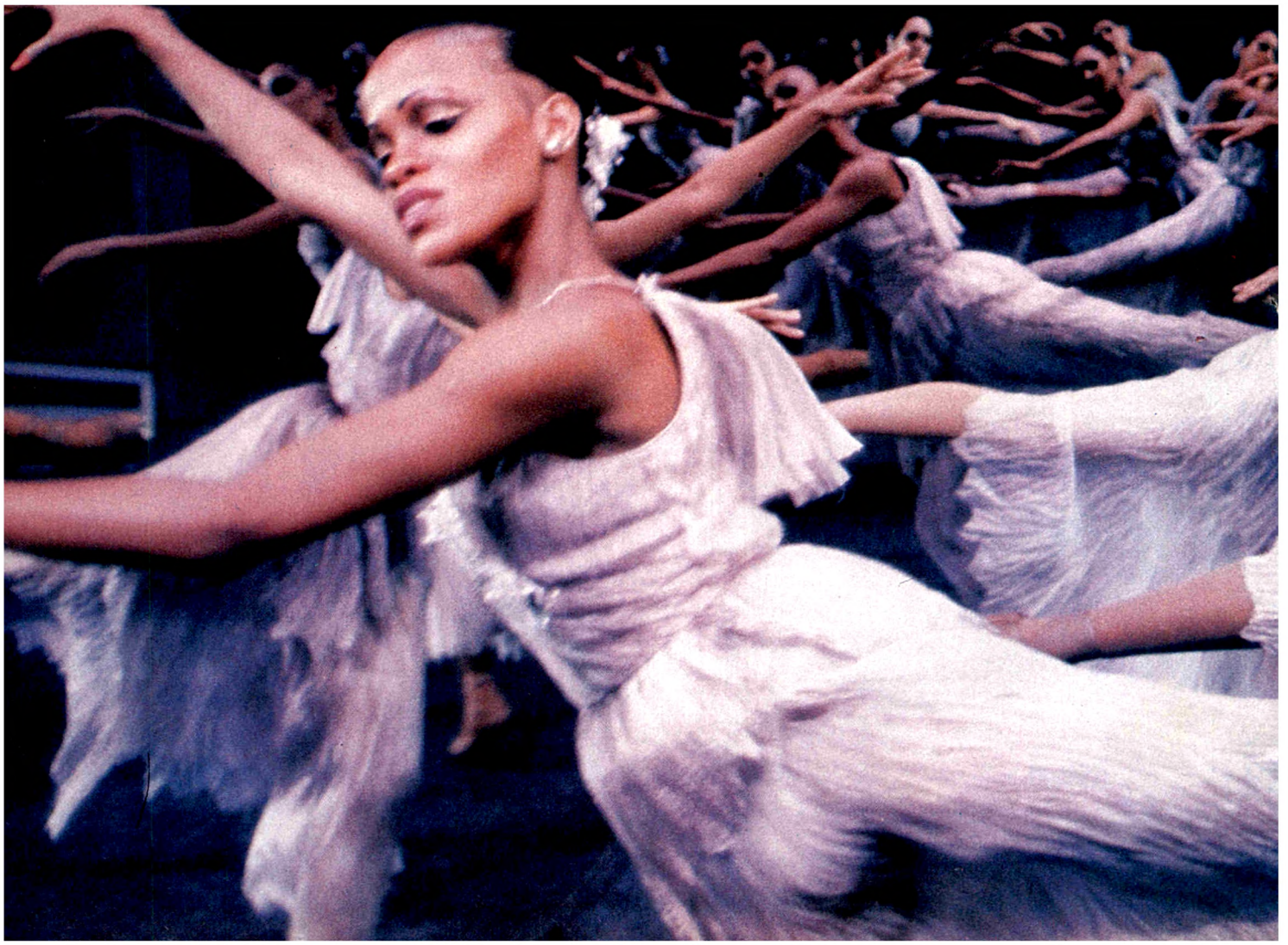
Dance Theatre of Harlem

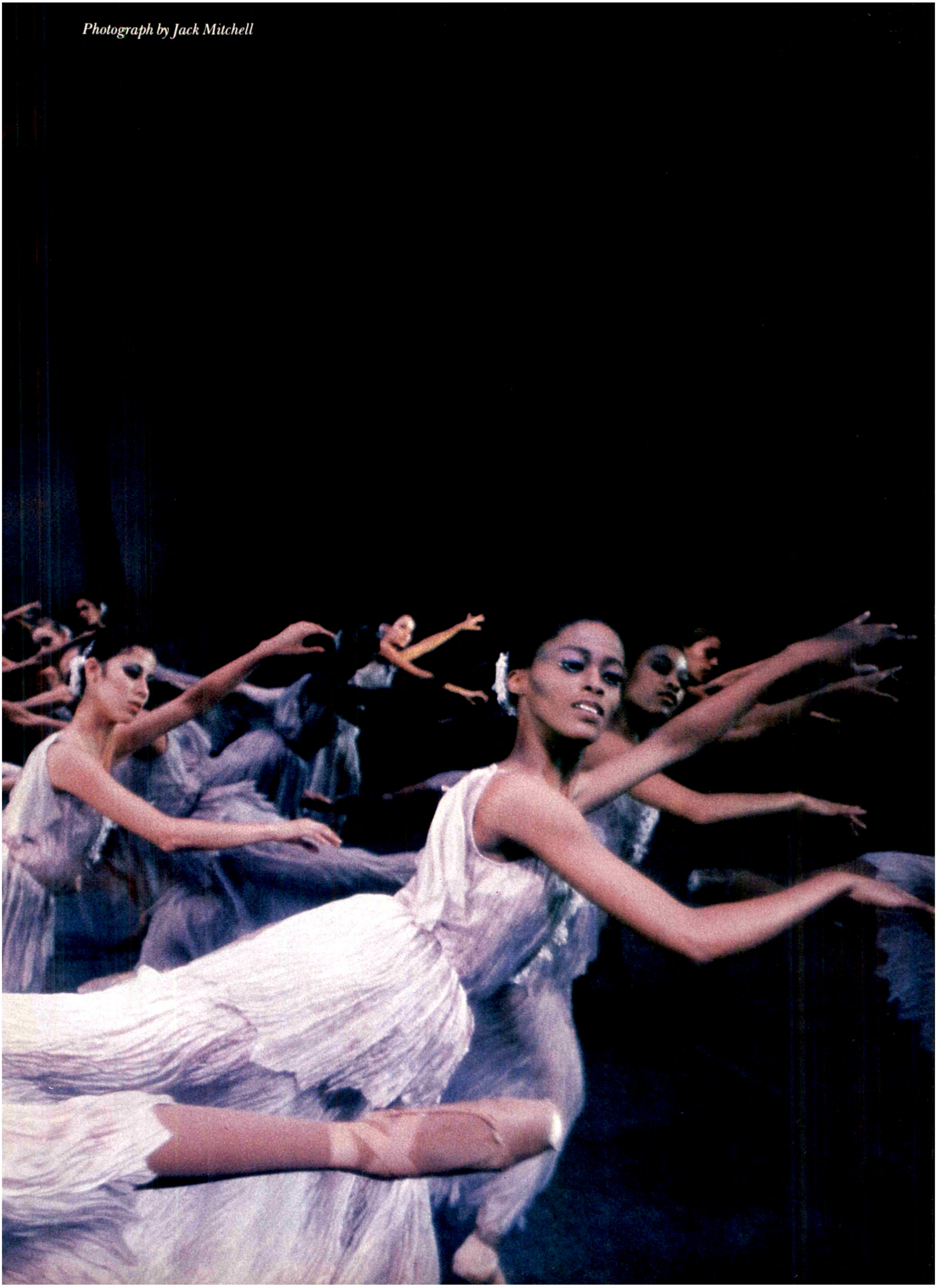
This New York-based company melds the classical ballet tradition with the variegated heritage of African and black American dance and culture. The first black dancer with a major American ballet troupe, Arthur Mitchell left the New York City Ballet in 1969 to start the Dance Theatre. In the company's recent staging of the 19th-century classic "Giselle," Mitchell transported the action from the Rhine Valley to the free black society of pre-Civil War Louisiana, yet choreographer Frederic Franklin retained much of the traditional dancing. Mitchell's own ballets also enlarge on European conventions. In fact, as critic Robert Coe says: "Mitchell's signature piece, 'Forces of Rhythm,' contrasts the free pelvis and back movements of African and Caribbean dance with the prancing footwork and lavish extensions of Balanchine's style."

STEPHANIE DABNEY
"FIREBIRD"
BY JOHN TARAS

Photograph by Martha Swope

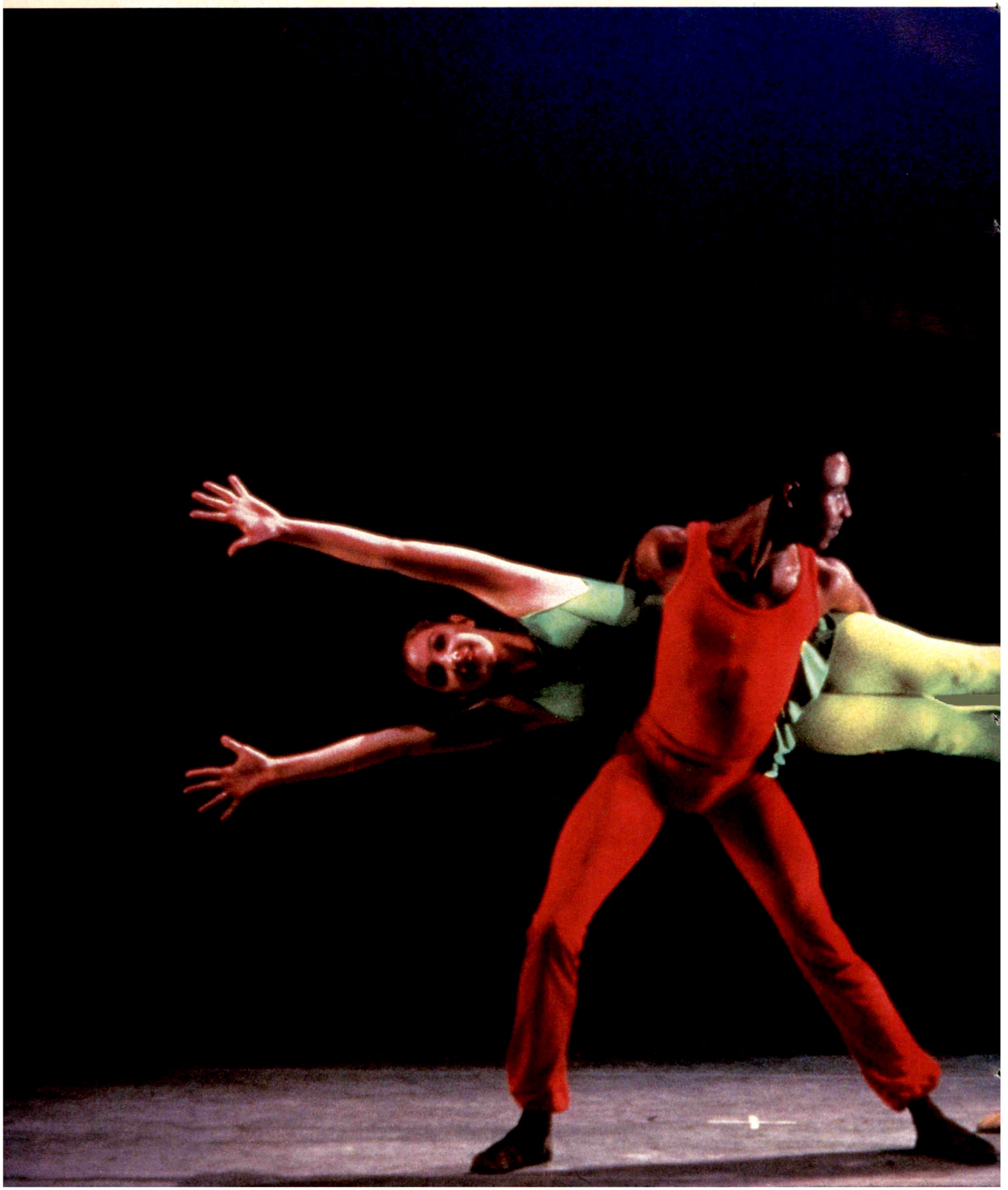


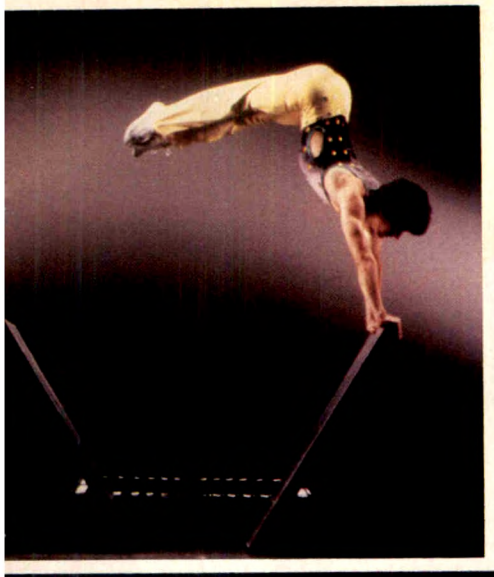




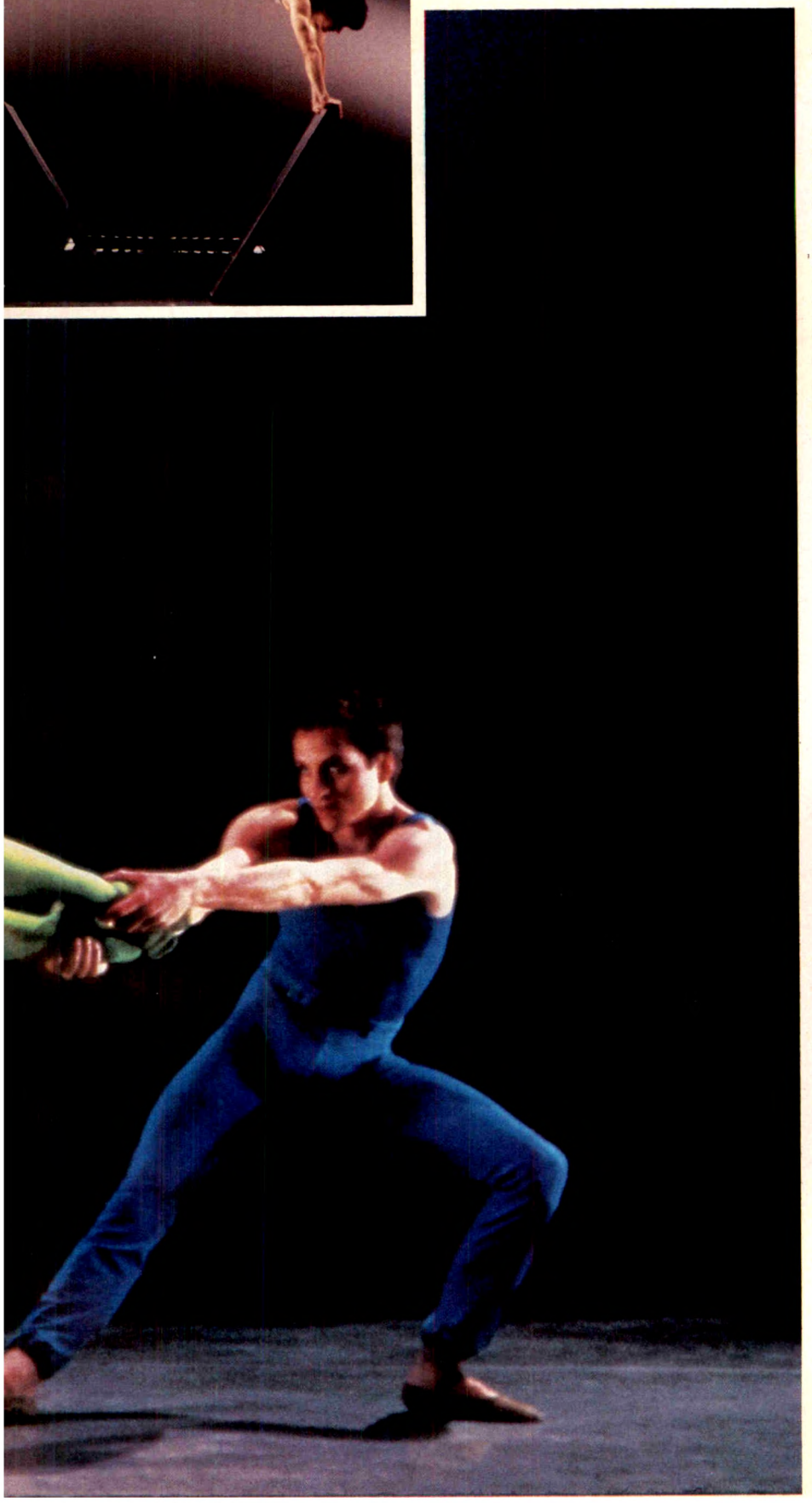
Photograph by Jack Mitchell

FFY MILLER, DARREN GIBSON AND PAUL VITALI • "HARBINGER" BY ELIOT FELD





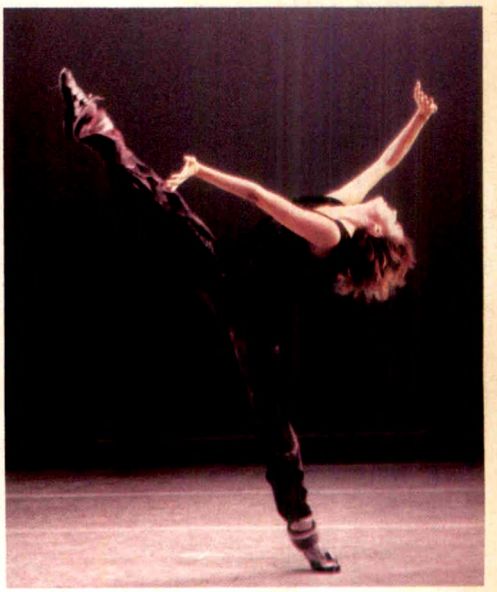
JAMES SEWELL
"MEDIUM: RARE" BY ELIOT FELD



Feld Ballet

Eliot Feld brings training in both modern dance and ballet to his troupe, which he founded in 1974. As a choreographer he employs the conventions of ballet, but he repeats and exaggerates the familiar steps to bring an athleticism often associated with modern dance. In "Medium: Rare" the soloist uses such props as ramps and a trampoline to amplify possible movements. Feld recently has set his dances to scores by minimalist composers like Steve Reich, but his works remain highly accessible. Alan Kriegsman of The Washington Post *writes that Feld's ballets "are addressed not to an audience of sophisticates, but to anyone with an appetite for physical daring and exuberance, dramatic pungency, wit and expert craftsmanship."*

LAUREN BUNN
"THE JIG IS UP" BY ELIOT FELD



Photographs by Martha Swope

Joffrey Ballet

When Robert Joffrey formed his company in 1956, he and his six dancers, including Gerald Arpino, toured the country in a battered station wagon. Since then, the Joffrey has proved itself a pioneer on many fronts. Joffrey was the first to commission works by modern-dance choreographers, beginning with Alvin Ailey and Twyla Tharp. His company appeared as the first subject of the innovative "Dance in America" television series, reflecting Joffrey's commitment to bring ballet to a large audience. But Joffrey's greatest contribution is generally considered to be his reconstructions of early-20th-century classics, most notably Nijinsky's "Le Sacre du printemps," which had not been performed since 1913. When Robert Joffrey died in 1988, he was succeeded as artistic director by Arpino, the company's chief choreographer.

Photographs by Herbert Migdoll



EDWARD STIERLE AND JEREL HILDING • "THE CLOWNS" BY GERALD ARPINO ▲

MEG GURIN, JULIE JANUS AND JILL DAVIDSON • "LE SACRE DU PRINTEMPS" BY VASLAV NIJINSKY



MARIA CALEGARI • SWAN LAKE BY GEORGE BALANCHINE



New York City Ballet

The brainchild of two of the most eminent names in American ballet—George Balanchine and Lincoln Kirstein—the New York City Ballet today is the largest company in America, with 100 dancers and an active repertory of more than 100 ballets, the majority by Balanchine and current codirector Jerome Robbins. While the company maintains Balanchine's distinctive style, since his death in 1983 it has diversified under its new codirector, Peter Martins. In 1988 the troupe celebrated its 40th birthday with a festival of dances by more than a dozen choreographers, using music by American composers from George Gershwin to rhythm-and-blues great Ray Charles. Yet every production of the New York City Ballet observes the credo of founder Balanchine that, "the important thing in ballet is movement itself, as it is sound which is important in a symphony."

Photographs by Steven Caras



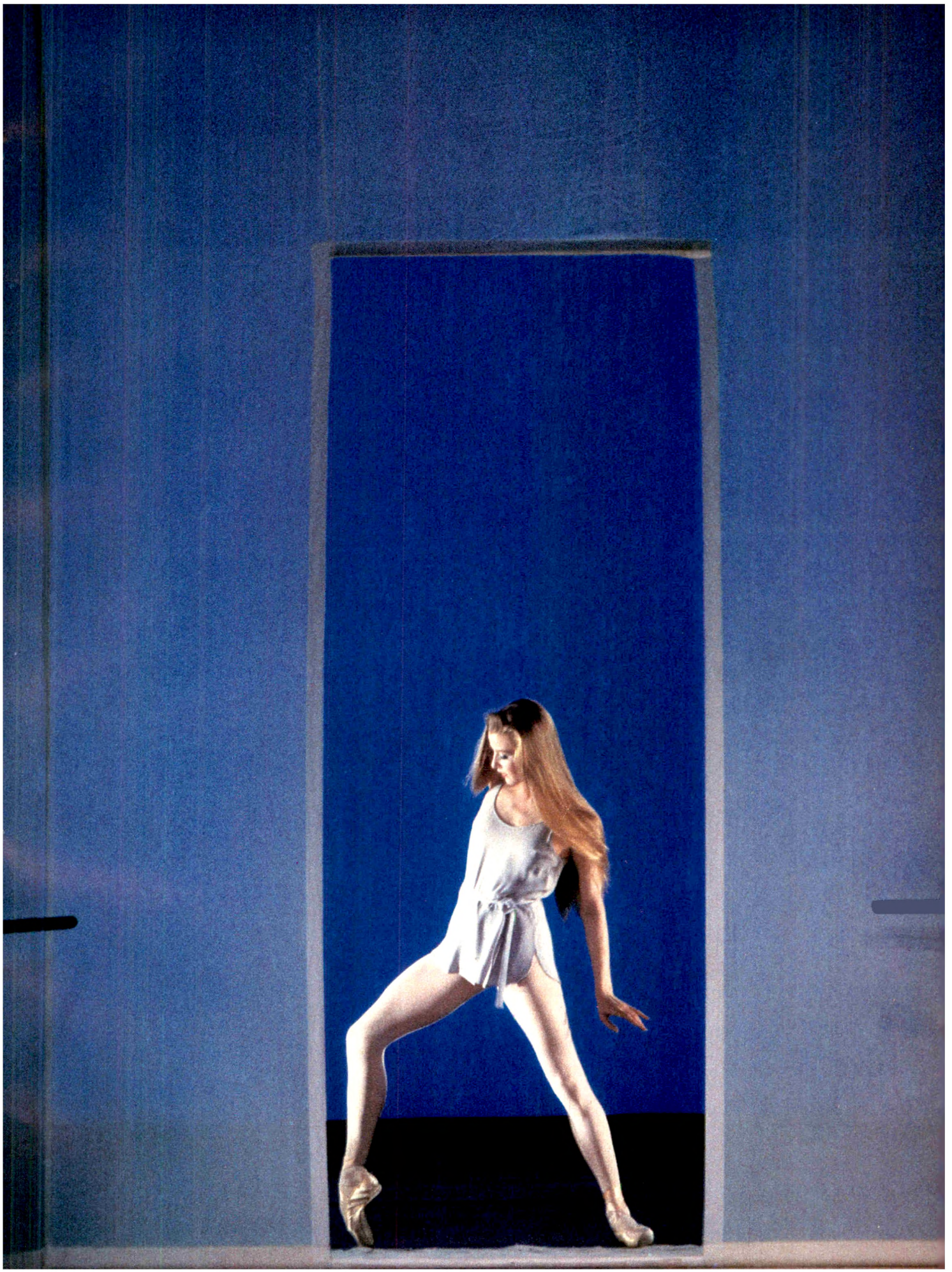
Photographs by Steven Caras

New York City Ballet • "Ives, Songs" by Jerome Robbins



New York City Ballet • "Antique Epigraphs" by Jerome Robbins





WHERE ARE THE

This is the question posed in a book that has recently been published in the United States and has generated wide controversy. The book is The Last Intellectuals, *and its author, Russell Jacoby, argues pessimistically that the generation of young American thinkers born after 1940 is missing from the debate on public issues. In these pages, the* Review *presents an excerpt from the book and a sharp rebuttal from two critics who are more optimistic about the state of the American intelligentsia.*

According to Jacoby, the nation's cultural landscape has become less fertile in recent decades. There are fewer general-interest magazines and the low-cost urban bohemias that nurture intellectuals are disappearing; most of the new generation of intellectuals have stayed on college campuses and become academics. Jacoby maintains that the lure of university life is insidious: professors are rewarded not for addressing large public issues, but for writing about their narrow fields in an impenetrable specialized jargon.

We get opposing views of current American intellectual life in a reply to Jacoby from literary critic Louis

THEY'RE ABSORBED IN ACADEMIA

By Russell Jacoby

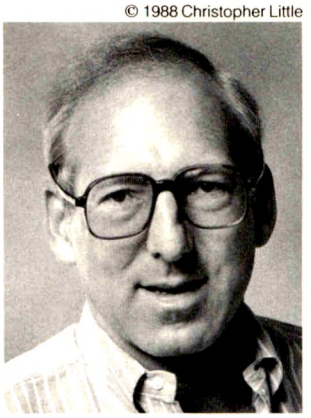
The few—extremely few—significant American intellectuals under the age of 35, even 45, have seldom elicited comment. They are easy to miss, especially because their absence is longstanding. An intellectual generation has not suddenly vanished; it simply never appeared. And it is already too late—the generation is too old—to show up.

The issue, if hardly discussed, is also charged; it provokes heated responses. Writers and editors draw back, as if insulted. Aren't the young authors today as talented and compelling as those from the past? Offended professors list Young Turks shaking up their fields. James Atlas's 1985 elegy for the New York intellectuals in *The New York Times Magazine* [see *Review* 3/86] sparked several angry replies: intellectual life is thriving outside New York; no need to bemoan the decline of Manhattan's intellectuals.

This is whistling in the dark. The proposition of a missing generation does not malign individuals. It is not a statement about personal integrity or genius. Complex factors stamp or undercut the formation of an intellectual generation; it would not be the first time that one failed to galvanize. However, more is at stake than an interesting observation; the issue is the vitality of a public culture.

Nor is it a simple political issue, at least not in conventional terms. There has been much talk of the rise of neoconservatism and the demise of radicalism, even of liberalism. Of course, the dominance of neoconservatives and the eclipse of radical intellectuals correspond to shifts in political realities. Neoconservatives dine at the White House; they are blessed with public attention, grants, government support.

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Russell Jacoby

It might be satisfying to conclude that this fully explains the vagaries of intellectual life: younger intellectuals, generally more radical than the neoconservatives, are ignored for political reasons; they are out of step with the times. Perhaps. But this leaves too much obscure. Compared to the 1950s, the Left has prospered. Marxist professors teach everywhere; radicals publish endlessly. Yet younger left intellectuals seem publicly invisible. Why? The political realities cannot be ignored, but deeper currents—social and economic—inform intellectual life.

To declare an intellectual generation "invisible" is fraught with difficulties. The statement seems to accept the judgment of the "public sphere"—newspapers, book reviews, talk shows—as truth itself; it risks confounding glitter with substance, TV exposure with intellectual weight. The public sphere is hardly neutral; it responds to money or power or drama, not to quiet talent or creative work.

If true, this observation easily degenerates into a cliché that the ruling ideas are the ideas of the ruling class; cultural studies vanish into economics. The im-

—continued on page 50

From *The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe* by Russell Jacoby. © 1987 by Russell Jacoby. Reprinted by permission of Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, New York.

INTELLECTUALS?

Menand and a brief comment from political scientist Mark Falcoff. They argue that there is a dominant public voice addressing provocative questions about American society, but these ideas are raised by neoconservatives. Moreover, while Jacoby's book purports to be about the decline of intellectual culture in America, what it's really about is the decline in influence of the American Left, and, says Menand, "it is symptomatic of the book's confusion that its author apparently can see no difference between the two subjects."

Russell Jacoby has taught history and social science at Boston and Brandeis universities, UCLA and, most recently, the University of California, San Diego. His other books include Social Amnesia *and* Dialectic of Defeat: Contours of Western Marxism. *Louis Menand is professor of English at Princeton University and contributing editor of* The New Republic. *He is the author of* Discovering Modernism, *a study of T.S. Eliot. Mark Falcoff is a visiting scholar at the Council on Foreign Relations and is the author of* Small Countries, Large Issues, *about Latin America.*

THEY'RE ALIVE AND WELL

By Louis Menand

Russell Jacoby thinks there is "a vacancy" in American culture. The postwar generation of intellectuals is missing. That generation "has not suddenly vanished," he says; "it simply never appeared. And it is already too late—the generation is too old—to show up."

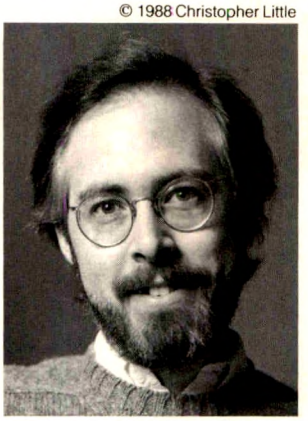
If you are under 45, reading these assertions in the opening pages of *The Last Intellectuals* is likely to induce a mild out-of-body sensation. Having just started a book that nobody but an intellectual would be interested in reading, you suddenly learn that you do not exist. But if you can suspend disbelief in yourself for a few pages, you will discover that Jacoby's complaint is actually somewhat more specific.

By "intellectuals" Jacoby means "public intellectuals"—"writers and thinkers who address a general and educated audience." The voices he misses among those who write for such an audience are the voices of "younger left intellectuals"—or (he uses the word interchangeably with *intellectuals*) *radicals*. Presented as a book about the decline of intellectual culture in America, *The Last Intellectuals* is in fact about the intellectual decline of the American Left. It is symptomatic of the book's confusion that its author apparently can see no difference between the two subjects.

There is no sense in responding to Jacoby's argument by trying to name the baby-boom versions of

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Louis Menand

earlier intellectuals such as Dwight Macdonald or Edmund Wilson. For one thing, it is pointless to measure promise against the achievement of a lifetime. Who was Edmund Wilson, what sort of cultural authority did he command, when he was 35? For another, why should intellectuals of this generation live the way intellectuals of the last lived? Of course the world of the intellectual has changed. So have the worlds of the butcher, the baker and the munitions maker. If intellectuals no longer sip espresso in MacDougal Street cafés in Greenwich Village, but jet off to conferences in Frankfurt, that says nothing about the value of their thinking. No doubt a good deal of nonsense gets passed around at those conferences; but it seems safe to say that there was a proportionate amount of nonsense aired on MacDougal Street as well.

In any case, the contrast between prewar bohemians and postwar professionals is essentially factitious. The image of café society as the traditional setting for American intellectual life is incongruous; café society is one of the things American intellectuals used to go to Paris for. And the older-generation writers Jacoby names with reverence were scarcely "bohemians"; they worked for a living as professional editors, journalists, teachers. His favorite examples of unreconstructed "radicals," Dwight Macdonald, Lewis Mumford and Edmund Wilson, wrote for *The New Yorker*, a magazine that does not underpay its writers, and that cannot exactly be said to cater to radical or bohemian opinion.

This preoccupation with intellectual lifestyles is

—continued on page 54

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THEY'RE ABSORBED IN ACADEMIA

pact of network television or national newsweeklies on cultural life can scarcely be underestimated; but it is not the whole story. The restructuring of cities, the passing of bohemia, the expansion of the university: these also inform culture. They are my subjects.

My concern is with public intellectuals, writers and thinkers who address a general and educated audience. Obviously, this excludes intellectuals whose works are too technical or difficult to engage a public. Nevertheless I believe it is a myth that private intellectuals thrive while public culture decays. The relationship between "private" and "public" intellectual work is complex. At least this can be said: there is a symbiotic relationship. The greatest minds from Galileo to Freud have not been content with private discoveries; they sought, and found, a public. If they seem too distant, too high a standard, the last generation of American intellectuals is my benchmark. They also embraced a public; the successor generation has not.

A public that reads serious books, magazines and newspapers has dwindled; it has not vanished. The writings of older intellectuals from John Kenneth Galbraith to Daniel Bell continue to elicit interest and discussion, which suggests that a public has not evaporated.

To put it sharply: the habitat, manners and idiom of intellectuals have been transformed within the past 50 years. Younger intellectuals no longer need or want a larger public; they are almost exclusively professors.

Independent intellectuals, who wrote for the educated reader, are dying out; to be sure, often they wrote for small periodicals. Yet these journals participated, if only through hope, in the larger community. The contributors wrote for intellectuals and sympathizers anywhere; small in size, the journals opened out to the world.

Today nonacademic intellectuals are an endangered species; they continue to loom large in the cultural world because they mastered a public idiom. The new academics far outnumber the independent intellectuals, but since they do not employ the vernacular, outsiders rarely know of them.

Academics write for professional journals that, unlike the little magazines, create insular societies. The professors share an idiom and a discipline. Gathering in annual conferences to compare notes, they constitute their own universe. A "famous" sociologist or art historian means famous to other sociologists or art historians, not to anyone else. As intellectuals became academics, they had no need to write in a public prose; they did not, and finally they could not.

The transmission belt of culture—the ineffable manner by which an older generation passes along not simply its knowledge but its dreams and hopes—is threatened. The larger culture rests on a decreasing number of aging intellectuals with no successors.

An irony colors this inquiry into a missing generation. The intellectuals absent from public life are largely those who came of age in the 1960s—a short term for the upheavals that lasted almost 15 years. How is it possible that these veterans of movements, who often targeted the university, derided their teachers and ridiculed past thinkers could mature into such earnest professionals, quieter than older intellectuals? I offer no single or simple answer, yet the irony hints of the magnitude of cultural restructuring. After the smoke lifted, many young intellectuals had never left school.

It was not always difficult to name the "young" intellectuals. Once writers and critics regularly, often obsessively, monitored the new generation; they differed not so much over the names but over their merits. A quick view of the 1950s yields a score of active critics, young and old: Mary McCarthy, Philip Rahv, C. Wright Mills, Dwight Macdonald, Lionel Trilling, David Riesman, Irving Howe, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., Edmund Wilson, Lewis Mumford, Malcolm Cowley, Sidney Hook and numerous others. Or consider the many vital works from the late 1950s and early '60s: John Kenneth Galbraith's *The Affluent Society*, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, Paul Goodman's *Growing Up Absurd*, Jane Jacobs's *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, C. Wright Mills's *The Power Elite*, William H. Whyte's *The Organization Man* and Michael Harrington's *The Other America*.

Simply listing these books and authors suggests two striking truths about the current scene: the same books or individuals command the cultural heights today, and very few books or people have been added. While isolated younger intellectuals have shown up—and usually receded—no generation has coalesced to challenge, or even to supplement, the older contributors. For a group of intellectuals to command the posts for 30 odd years—from the 1950s to the '80s—is amazing; in a society that prides itself on youth and dynamism, it is astonishing.

Over 10 years ago a sociologist studying influential intellectuals commented on the absence of younger thinkers and critics. Charles Kadushin wanted to characterize—name and describe—America's "intellectual elite." To do this he interviewed 110 influential intellectuals, who were identified by regularly appearing in "influential" periodicals, such as *The New York Review of Books*, *Commentary*, *Harper's Magazine*, *The Atlantic*, *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times Book Review*.

From his study Kadushin obtained a list of the most prestigious intellectuals. In 1970 the 10 leading intellectuals were: Daniel Bell, Noam Chomsky, John Kenneth Galbraith, Irving Howe, Dwight Macdonald, Mary McCarthy, Norman Mailer, Robert Silvers, Susan Sontag and, "tying" at tenth place, Lionel Trilling and Edmund Wilson. None could be considered young, with the possible exception of Susan Sontag (37 in 1970).

The greatest minds from Galileo to Freud have not been content with private discoveries; they sought, and found, a public. The last generation of American intellectuals also embraced a public; the successor generation has not.

Kadushin asked this "elite" to identify younger intellectuals on the horizon; they were unable to do so. Doubting that this indicated a permanent vacancy, Kadushin surmised that "the heirs have not yet made themselves known." Fifteen years later this confidence looks ill-founded; the heirs have still not made themselves known. A list of significant intellectuals today would look very much like Kadushin's (minus the deaths).

Other, more informal surveys of the intellectual scene have also appeared since the Kadushin study. Although they do not deplore, or even note, a missing generation, their findings evidence the absence. Daniel Bell, for instance, mapped several generations of New York intellectuals. The most recent, a "second generation," included no surprises, no new names (Norman Podhoretz, Steven Marcus, Robert Brustein, Midge Decter, Jason Epstein, Robert Silvers, Susan Sontag, Norman Mailer, Philip Roth, Theodore Solotaroff).

My argument of a missing generation might be challenged by proposing that the new intellectuals thrive in journalism. I agree that "new" and not-so-new journalism (personal reportage, muckraking, rock-music criticism) testifies—or once testified—to a vigorous younger generation. Yet constraints of living solely from the press—deadlines, space, money—finally dilute, not accentuate, intellectual work.

My argument might also be countered by responding that younger intellectuals have surfaced in film and television; or that new writers exist, even thrive, outside a public arena that has been closed to them by older editors and publishers. A new intellectual generation, however, is hardly visible in mainstream film or television; and it is doubtful whether editors, no matter how despotic or shortsighted, can regulate the generational flow.

Far more important are the economic winds that propel cultural life, and at times chill it. Of the thousands of statistics describing the transformation of the United States in the 20th century, two may partly explain a missing generation: the increasing substitution of corporate employment for independent businessmen, workers and craftsmen; and the post-World War II "explosion" of higher education. These currents carried intellectuals from independence to dependence, from free-lance writing to salaried teaching in colleges. Between 1920 and 1970 the United States population doubled, but the number of college teachers multiplied 10-fold, rising from 50,000 in 1920 to 500,000 in 1970.

The newly opened and enlarged colleges allowed, if not compelled, intellectuals to desert a precarious existence for stable careers. They exchanged the pressures of deadlines and free-lance writing for the security of salaried teaching and pensions—with summers off to write and loaf. When Daniel Bell left *Fortune* magazine in 1958 for a university life, he told publisher Henry Luce he had four good reasons: "June, July, August and September."

With few reservations, by the end of the 1950s, American intellectuals decamped from the cities to the campuses, from the cafés to the cafeterias. The losses seemed trifling; they gave up the pleasures of sleeping late, schmoozing with friends and dreaming up their own projects. They also gave up the deep anxiety of selling their dreams to indifferent editors so as to eat and pay the rent. Intellectuals as academics no longer relied on either the small magazines of opinion and literature or the larger periodicals, such as *The New Yorker* or *Fortune*, as their outlets. Professional journals and monographs became their sustenance. Scholarly editors and "referees," professional colleagues of the same specialty, now judged their manuscripts, supplanting the general editors of *The New Republic* or *Partisan Review*.

The constraints and corruptions of academic life are hardly news. Savage criticism of American universities dates back to Upton Sinclair's *The Goose-Step* (1923) and Thorstein Veblen's *The Higher Learning in America* (1918), which he intended to subtitle "A Study in Total Depravity." The critical issue, however, is not the novelty of the situation but its extent. When universities occupied a quadrant of cultural life, their ills (and virtues) meant one thing. When they staked out the whole turf, their rules became *the* rules.

These rules did not encourage a leathery independence. Yet the "conspicuous conformity to popular taste" and the kowtowing to business—the "total depravity" that Veblen denounced—lag behind the reality, the vast university system of the postwar years and its requirements. Political timidity was in the long run less essential than academic know-how and productivity. Academic intellectuals did not cherish direct or

elegant writing; the fact of publication far outweighed any quibbling over style. Academic writing developed into unreadable communiqués sweetened by thanks to colleagues and superiors.

The generation born around and after 1940 emerged in a society where the identity of universities and intellectual life was almost complete. To be an intellectual entailed being a professor. This generation flowed into the universities, and if they wanted to be intellectuals, they stayed. The issue is not their talent, courage or politics. Rather, the occasion to master a public prose did not arise; consequently, their writings lacked a public impact. Regardless of their numbers, to the larger public they are invisible. The missing intellectuals are lost in the universities.

For intellectuals born before 1940 universities did not play the same role. To be an intellectual did not entail college teaching. The college route was seldom emphatically rejected as not considered: it was not a real possibility. To be an intellectual, rather, necessitated moving to New York or Chicago and writing books and articles.

To these crude categories additional refinements can be made by identifying generations of 1900, 1920 and 1940. Intellectuals born at the turn of the century—Lewis Mumford (1895-), Dwight Macdonald (1906-82), Edmund Wilson (1895-1972)—represent classical American intellectuals; they lived their lives by way of books, reviews and journalism; they never or rarely taught in universities. They were superb essayists and graceful writers, easily writing for a larger public. They were also something more: iconoclasts, critics, polemicists, who deferred to no one.

The generation born around 1920—Alfred Kazin (1915-), Daniel Bell (1919-), Irving Howe (1920-)—might be called transitional. They grew up writing for small magazines when universities remained marginal; this experience informed their style—elegant and accessible essays directed toward the wider intellectual community. Later, in the 1950s, they often accepted university positions, which looked better and better as the nonacademic habitat diminished. In their mastery of a public prose they are loyal to their past; in a precise sense they are obsolete.

The full weight of academization hit the generation born after 1940; they grew up in a world where non-university intellectuals hardly existed. These social realities did not only dictate a change in prose; they encouraged a complete renovation of intellectual identity and self-identity. Almost from adolescence the post-1940 intellectuals grew up in a university environment; its trappings and forms became theirs. For instance, the planning and execution of a doctoral dissertation—often ridiculed by the outsider—loomed large. The research style, the idiom, the sense of the "discipline" and one's place in it: these branded the intellectual souls of the academics.

Yet earlier American intellectuals were almost completely spared these rites. Very few of the 1900 generation wrote dissertations; and when they did, the insignificance of the university in intellectual life prompted them to look beyond it to a larger public. Lionel Trilling alludes to this in recalling his dissertation. "Something of the intellectual temper of the time...is suggested by my determination that the work should find its audience not among scholars but among the general public."

Trilling was much the exception in following the straight and narrow academic path. Few even of the "transitional" generation earned doctoral degrees. They entered the universities in the 1950s under circumstances that scarcely would be allowed later, as tenured professors at "major" universities without Ph.D.s; or they were awarded advanced degrees under clauses rarely invoked again. Daniel Bell recalls that when he was about to be granted tenure at Columbia University, an awkward question came up. They asked, " 'Do you have a Ph.D.?' I said 'No.' They asked, 'Why?' I said, 'I never submitted a thesis.' " This was happily resolved by awarding him a Ph.D. for past work, his book *The End of Ideology*.

Such informality reflects a past era; it is next to impossible today to obtain university posts without a Ph.D., as did Irving Howe or Alfred Kazin, or to be awarded degrees on the basis of past work, as were Daniel Bell or Nathan Glazer.

Nor was intellectual life outside the university enticing for post-1940 intellectuals. The shrinking cultural space—acknowledged or unacknowledged—herded younger intellectuals into the university. If academic salaries and security were the carrot, the decline of traditional intellectual life was the stick.

To live from selling book reviews and articles ceased to be difficult; it became impossible. The number of serious magazines and newspapers steadily declined (and the pay scale of those remaining hardly increased), leaving few avenues; the signs all pointed toward the colleges.

The dwindling space is not only a metaphor; it denotes the loss of living areas, the renovation of urban bohemias into exclusive quarters of boutiques and townhouses. Since 1900 the most prominent urban bohemia, Greenwich Village, beckoned America's intellectuals with the promise of emancipation, art and free thinking—all sustained by cheap rents. Although often written off as dead, the Village remained alive through the 1940s and '50s. "I arrived one fall afternoon in 1949," wrote Michael Harrington, "put down my bags, and went out to find Greenwich Village." He found it, full of kindred spirits, "voluntary exiles from a middle class."

The demise of Greenwich Village, which of course cannot be neatly dated, ensured the eclipse of the new generation of independent intellectuals. Through the 1950s the Village functioned as an escape and refuge from conventional careers; even as a myth it offered the glimpse of an independent life. That imposters, frauds and poseurs flocked to Greenwich Village is not the point; this was always true, and perhaps added to its charm: they flocked nowhere else. Without Greenwich Village young intellectuals could not challenge or imagine alternatives to university careers.

Almost from adolescence the post-1940s intellectuals grew up in a university environment. The research style of a doctoral dissertation, the idiom, the sense of one's "discipline": these branded the intellectual souls of the academics.

Gentrification eliminated the cheap rents of Greenwich Village, squeezing out marginal intellectuals and artists. Areas that might have served as bohemian centers succumbed to real-estate developers almost as soon as they emerged.

Urban bohemians elsewhere succumbed to the same economic pressures. Greenwich Village was the most prominent, but hardly the only bohemian center. North Beach in San Francisco and Venice in Los Angeles also attracted disaffected intellectuals and artists. Other cities boasted small, sometimes tiny and ephemeral, bohemian sections that served as way stations for young intellectuals.

The eclipse of these urban living areas completes the eclipse of cultural space. "The free spaces—both real and metaphorical—once occupied by bohemia have become narrower and harder to find," writes Princeton University historian Jerrold Seigel in his study of bohemia. The geography—cultural and physical—offers few refuges for intellectuals seeking alternatives to city or suburban campuses.

The transformation of the traditional intellectual habitat is not instantaneous; it parallels the decay of the cities, the growth of the suburbs and the expansion of the universities. There is no need to announce the collapse of civilization when fast-food outlets nudge out greasy spoons, vending machines replace newspaper stands or green campuses supplant vandalized city parks; but there is little reason to ignore its impact on the rhythm of cultural life.

Universities encourage a definite intellectual form. They do not hire those who are unable or unwilling to fit in. Even Henry Luce of the *Time* magazine empire, often denounced as a master propagandist, employed mavericks and dissenters. Universities, on the other hand, hire by committees: one needs degrees, references, the proper deference, a pleasant demeanor.

It is even possible to chart a cultural shift in the unlikely quarter of book acknowledgments and dedications. Early Elizabethan books were usually graced by flowery prefaces dedicated to a patron who supported the writer and who, it was hoped, would be instructed and edified by the work. In the course of the 17th and 18th centuries, the reading and book-buying public replaced the patron; and books frequently were dedicated and directed to the gentle and interested reader.

To jump to the present, opening serious nonfiction books is like skimming personal telephone books; often a dense list of colleagues, friends, institutions and foundations precedes the text. This style serves to reassure as well as intimidate readers and reviewers. Even with the requisite qualifier—the opinions and mistakes are strictly the author's—who wants to challenge a book inspected by scores of scholars, published by a major university and supported by several foundations?

These are tendencies, not laws of nature. The country is too vast, the culture too contradictory, to neatly categorize. Intellectuals may be everywhere, but almost everywhere they face similar and limited options: the young especially are vulnerable, precisely because they emerge in a situation of dwindling intellectual choices. Hence the historical witticism: intellectuals of the irrational, far-out, hang-loose 1960s matured into a more buttoned-up, professional and invisible group than did preceding intellectual generations. One thousand radical sociologists but no C. Wright Mills; 300 critical literary theorists but no Edmund Wilson; scads of Marxist economists but no Paul Sweezy or Harry Braverman; urban critics galore but no Lewis Mumford or Jane Jacobs.

What is quiet and professional today may be open and public tomorrow. Younger intellectuals, if they mainly teach and write for each other, have little immediate impact; but they have students who pass through and on to other things. This is the conservatives' nightmare: while radicals and liberals have been chased from public and visible posts, they actually staff the educational system, corroding the Republic from within. Yet it is only their nightmare; at least there seems little reason to posit an emerging gap between a university and a public culture, the former subversive, the latter apologetic. Studies of undergraduates generally show them to be more conservative than in the past, more concerned with careers and money, and less interested in what some graying New Left professors might think. This too encourages a professionalization, a turning in toward more receptive colleagues. Nevertheless, today as in the past, universities preserve a cultural breathing space where people do study Marx—and Adam Smith.

Public intellectual is a category fraught with difficulties. *Publicist*, if it once connoted an engagement

with the state and law, is almost obsolete, victimized by Hollywood and "public relations": it now signifies someone who handles and manipulates the media, an advance or front man (or woman). A public intellectual or old-style publicist is something else, perhaps the opposite, an incorrigibly independent soul answering to no one. Yet, this does not suffice; the definition must include a commitment not simply to a professional or private domain but to a public world—and a public language, the vernacular.

The elaboration of national and vernacular languages, the voice of new urban classes, in the face of an ossifying Latin, the idiom of a scholastic elite, characterizes modern culture since the Renaissance. "All over Europe," explains literary critic Erich Auerbach, while Latin turned brittle, "first in Italy, then in the Iberian peninsula, France and England, an educated public with a *Hochsprache* of its own now made its appearance." The adoption of the vernacular was not always simple or peaceful, for it meant that groups once excluded from religious and scientific controversy could now enter the fray.

The "crime" of Galileo, for instance, was less what he discovered or said but how and where he said it. He renounced Latin to write in fluid Italian for a new public. As the Florentine ambassador reported after a meeting of papal authorities with Galileo, "If he wanted to hold this Copernican opinion, he was told, let him hold it quietly and not spend so much effort in trying to have others share it." This is precisely what Galileo rejected. He had decided, states a modern account by American historian Giorgio de Santillana, "to bypass the universities and address himself in the vernacular to the intelligent public at large. This involved no doubt a sacrifice of the international value of Latin, but Galileo did not care to mark himself as an exclusive member of the light-shy and scattered republic of scholars....He felt right at ease in the street, in the square...." The danger of yielding to a new Latin, a new scholasticism insulated from larger public life, tints the future gray on gray.

There is no doubt that the demise of public intellectuals reflects the recomposition of the public itself; it coincides with the wild success of television, the expansion of the suburbs, the corrosion of the cities, the fattening of the universities. The eclipse of the big general magazines, such as *Look* and *Life*, registers a parcellation of a once more homogeneous public; they have been replaced by "special interest" magazines—computer, travel, sports. In view of these developments, the disappearance of general intellectuals into professions seems completely understandable, inevitable and perhaps desirable.

And yet if this or any study were only to ratify what has been and must be, it would be pointless. Younger intellectuals have responded to their times, as they must; they have also surrendered to them, as they need not. Humanity does not make history just as it pleases, but it does make history. By the back-door choice enters the historical edifice. ♦

—continued from page 49

THEY'RE ALIVE AND WELL

one instance of the book's most maddening feature: the insistent use of the term *intellectual* as an honorific, bestowed upon writers and thinkers whose view of public life conforms to the tradition Jacoby refers to as "radical." The intellectual is the marginal man; and since the marginal is the natural enemy of the mainstream, his politics must be politics of the Left.

Thus Jacoby writes of neoconservatism as though it were simply an abandonment of intellect. "Conservatives' opposition to [academic] professionals founders on their suspicion of all intellectuals," he says. "They inch toward anti-intellectualism....They do not allow that an independent intellectual can also be a critic of society." There are two errors in these sentences. The first is the obvious one of refusing to credit contemporary conservatism with having an intellectual position. It is hard to see how this refusal advances even a left critique of American culture. To complain that the dominant intellectual voice in public life today is neoconservative is to register a perfectly legitimate gripe; to say that because the dominant voice in public life is neoconservative there are no more intellectuals is simply incoherent.

The second error is more profound; it ratifies, in fact, the extraordinary success of the neoconservative movement. That error is the presumption that neoconservatives are not critics of American society. Nothing has been more disabling for liberalism than its willingness to accept—or its passiveness in the face of—the neoconservative's insinuation that his definition of America is true to the promise and true to the fact. It is not. The neoconservative tells us that U.S. markets are, or ought to be, private and laissez-faire, when Americans have lived for 50 years, and can have every expectation of continuing to live, in a mixed economy. The neoconservative says that the United States has, or ought to have, a single cultural tradition, continuous with the culture the 18th-century Founders inherited from Western Europe, when American culture has always been polyethnic and pluralistic—a culture of cultures—and shows no sign of becoming less so. The neoconservative states that the American people would like to have their elected representatives legislate in matters of private morality, if only liberal courts would let them; but when conservative judge Robert Bork was stopped at the very doorstep of the Supreme Court, it was because senator after senator could not accept his contention that the Constitution implied no right to privacy. Isn't Robert Bork a radical, and a conservative critic of

Jacoby writes of neoconservatism as though it were simply an abandonment of intellect. To complain that the dominant intellectual voice in public life is neoconservative is to register a perfectly legitimate gripe; to say, as Jacoby does, that because the dominant voice in public life is neoconservative there are no more intellectuals is simply incoherent.

American society, and an intellectual? Isn't Allan Bloom in his *The Closing of the American Mind* [see *Review* 2/88]?

To say that Jacoby's analysis is hobbled by this inability to see that social criticism is not the exclusive purview of the Left—an inability reflected in a callow refusal to grant contemporary conservatism intellectual cogency—is an understatement. *The Last Intellectuals* is a small monument to that infirmity. Thus, to take a single example, when Jacoby discusses the career of leftist historian Herbert Gutman, he cites Gutman's *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom*, his reply to Daniel Patrick Moynihan's 1967 report on the black family and the culture of poverty, as an instance of the kind of intellectual heroism younger academics no longer attain to. But surely Moynihan's report—whether one regards its conclusions as accurate or distorted, progressive or reactionary—was in its context the radical statement, the affront to conventional wisdom. Yet Moynihan is not mentioned as a "public intellectual."

The really interesting question about postwar intellectual life, the question Jacoby's book struggles to confront, is the question of what happened to the New Left as a source of political opinion. "By the 1980s," wrote journalist Jack Newfield in 1966, "Tom Hayden, Norman Fruchter, Robb Burlage, Mario Savio, Dick Flacks, Bob Parris and Carl Oglesby will be major social critics." Jacoby cites the prediction and notes the irony; and he devotes two chapters of his book to explaining what happened. Here was a movement that was not bereft of ideas, that had demographics on its side, that crossed swords often with leftists of the older generation and won many of the battles; and today, 20 years later, the Old Left (some of them now the new conservatives) still rules the turf of public political discourse, and the New Left, in anything like its original inspiration, has sunk from view. Where did it go?

Jacoby's answer is that it went into the academy, where it lost its voice in the Babel of scholarship. "The New Left that stayed on the campus," he says,

> proved industrious and well-behaved. Often without missing a beat, they moved from being undergraduates and graduate students to junior faculty positions and tenured appointments....In the end it was not the New Left intellectuals who invaded the universities but the reverse: the academic idiom, concepts and concerns occupied, and finally preoccupied, young left intellectuals.

Politics became university politics, department politics, career politics. "American Marxists today," Jacoby notes with scorn, "have campus offices and assigned parking spaces." They paved paradise, put up a faculty lounge.

The analysis is not new, but it is sound; and to his credit Jacoby pursues it with pretty much the same asperity as he does his attack on liberal converts to neoconservatism. (Despite everything else about it, this book is not without bravery; it spares almost no one.) But because he is so chary of giving credit even to his own side, Jacoby underestimates the extent to which, for better or worse, younger academics have succeeded in the last 10 years in moving political concerns to the foreground in some disciplines (the politics of interpretation in the humanities, the politics of law in legal education), and the extent to which this new emphasis has affected the way those subjects are taught.

But Jacoby is right to understand the struggle as primarily a professional one, conducted on professional terms for professional prestige. His complaint is that in the process the connection with the greater world outside the disciplines has been lost:

> Professionalization leads to privatization or depoliticization, a withdrawal of intellectual energy from a larger domain to a narrower discipline. Leftists who entered the university hardly invented this process, but they accepted, even accelerated it. Marxism itself has not been immune.

One need not share the surprise at the academicization of contemporary American Marxism—with no constituency in the real world, where else was it to go but to the land of theory?—to feel the general justice of

the point. The American university has been in one of its contractive phases since the 1960s, and when enrollments sag and the job market tightens, professional standards tend to narrow as well. And when standards narrow, esotericism, accompanied by a certain hysterical careerism, creeps into the discourse. Phases like this one have recurred cyclically throughout the history of the academy, and the current contraction may be approaching its term; but it has, in the meantime, done its damage to intellectual life—and not only to intellectual life on the Left.

But suppose that history in its cunning reversed the processes by which, as Jacoby describes it, younger intellectuals on the Left have been silenced, or entangled by the academic octopus. What would those intellectuals contribute to the public debate? Jacoby does not consider the question one would have thought came before all other questions: whether the ideas of the Left have faded from the intellectual scene not because of some failure in the environment, but because of some failure in the ideas. Jacoby therefore does not speculate about what a left critique of American life would look like if it recovered its public voice.

His assumption appears to be that it would sound pretty much the way it sounded 40 years ago. The hero of *The Last Intellectuals*, the writer put forward most enthusiastically as the model of critical thinking and forceful expression, is sociologist C. Wright Mills. Much in Jacoby's attack on the contemporary intellectual for abandoning his independence is in fact a conscious echo of Mills's analysis in *White Collar* (1951). This is the way Mills put it:

> When irresponsible decisions prevail and values are not proportionately distributed, universal deception must be practiced by and for those who make the decisions and who have the most of what values there are to have. An increasing number of intellectual men and women work within powerful bureaucracies and for the relatively few who do the deciding....If, as never before, intellectuals find it difficult to locate their masters in the impersonal machineries of authority in which they work, this, despite the anxieties it may at times cause them, makes more possible the postures of objectivity and integrity they continue to fancy.

It is indeed a style of expression one encounters less frequently these days. The mind-numbing level of abstraction (what does it actually mean to say that "values are not proportionately distributed"?), the demagogic language ("universal deception," "their masters in the impersonal machineries of authority"), and above all the complete contempt for the motives and the claims to "objectivity" and "integrity" of all but the like-minded—if this is indeed what Jacoby means by public left discourse, it doesn't seem such a misfortune that we should have to wait for it to discover new minds and new voices. ♦

THE NEW

By Mark Falcoff

Russell Jacoby's contribution is to document, with considerable accuracy and verve, the state of the American academy today, and its relationship—or rather, its disconnection—with intellectual life broadly speaking. The problem with *The Last Intellectuals* is that it doesn't stop at description, but ventures into thickets of analysis, where the author often loses his way. With all its merits, this book is in many ways nothing but an excuse for its author to vent his spleen against neoconservatives, but also against the academic Left, which he sees as too self-centered and self-satisfied to work for radical social change.

The truth is that there are plenty of "public intellectuals" around these days, but most of them are neoconservatives. Jacoby makes much of the generational factor—as if Irving Kristol, Daniel Bell, Norman Podhoretz and others are something of an endangered species. But, as he himself notes, the journals they have led, particularly *Commentary* and *The Public Interest*, have been unusually open to new contributors. Thus, there is a whole new crop coming along, including Nick Eberstadt, Joshua Muravchik, Scott McConnell, David Gress, Bruce Bawer, Mary Tedeschi, Mark Lilla, Roger Kaplan, Suzanne Garment, Terry Teachout, Daniel Pipes, Eliot

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URBAN INTELLECTUALS

Cohen, Stephen Schwartz, Fernanda Eberstadt, Carol Iannone and many, many others, a few under 30, many under 40 and all under 50. But the price of being a public intellectual in the United States is very nearly to leave academia altogether, a decision which—given the salary and general environment—is not as difficult as it once might have been.

Jacoby also misses an essential point about American university life. During the 1960s one of the war cries of the campus Left was "Power to the people!" If actually applied literally at that time, however, it would have enthroned not the New Left but conservative populist George Wallace. Since the defeat of George McGovern in 1972, the academic Left has retreated to a defensive perimeter where, by redefining the boundaries, they can wholly control the environment. There the "people" are now in power; the price which they have had to pay, however, is a decreased relevance to American society. To be sure, not everyone in the academy considers this cost excessive; it is Jacoby who is dissatisfied. His notion of a public intellectual is a left-wing intellectual, and he is right to note that there is no evident successor-generation to replace the Irving Howes and the Alfred Kazins. Again, however, this lack may not be felt by those for whom the principal objective is ideological hegemony in a restricted space, rather than a more diffuse (and problematic) cultural influence in the society at large.

Books that deplore the passing of an age always make one wonder if things were really so golden in times of old. How good were the "public intellectuals" of the 1930s and '40s? Above all, was New York so inexpensive 50 years ago, taking into account what people earned? Edmund Wilson's diaries for the 1930s and '40s are full of worries about money, and he, after all, was one of the most productive writers of his time, who never had difficulty placing his articles.

Further, things may not be quite as bad today as Jacoby makes out. Not every contemporary academic has dropped out of the public discourse—the names of James Tuttleton, or Kenneth S. Lynn, or Robert H. Ferrell or Joseph Epstein immediately come to mind, as do Richard Pipes, Irving Louis Horowitz and James Q. Wilson. What is new is the think-tank-*cum*-magazine, which has made possible the reurbanization of a new intellectual class. Many of these are in Washington, D.C.—the American Enterprise Institute, the Cato Institute, the Brookings Institution—but some are not. There is the Institute for Contemporary Studies in San Francisco, the Manhattan Institute in New York, and a host of institutions set up to study specific issues relating to individual states, usually located in important regional centers. There are magazines like *The Public Interest*/*National Interest*, *The New Criterion* and *Grand Street* in New York and *The Atlantic* in Boston. And, of course, there is *The New Republic*, produced in Washington but owned (and edited) by Martin Peretz, who lives in Cambridge, near Boston.

Apart from being located in large metropolitan centers, these institutions have something else in common. Their intellectuals face outward; instead of continually bouncing off each other like academics, they carry on a dialogue with an ever-changing cast of characters, many of whom are not themselves intellectuals. This not only forces them to speak the language of daily life, but makes them more sensitive to the realities of the everyday world. They are also free from the pressures of peers to conform, since they do not live in the asphyxiating environment of the university town. Small wonder so few are leftists. It is academia, not intellectual life, which is in trouble in America. That is the book that Jacoby started to write, and one wishes he had tried to finish. ♦

TELEVISION'S COVERT CHALLENGE

Nearly everybody watches TV, but few understand how this small screen alters our perceptions of reality.

By Joshua Meyrowitz

In this essay Joshua Meyrowitz, a media analyst in the tradition of the late Marshall McLuhan, discusses how television influences contemporary society. He argues that TV is an intimate medium of expression, not of ideas. It promotes the "performance" aspects of events: "On television, even political debates have little to do with words and arguments and much to do with image and style." As an all-purpose source of entertainment and news, it blurs the distinction between reality and drama, between events and commentary on those events. In reporting on our culture, television changes that culture, then reports on those changes and reworks them again.

Meyrowitz's insights into the role of television in the United States are increasingly relevant to other cultures. In 1986, there were over 625 million television sets in the world, one for every eight men, women and children. Although the author's point of departure here is the explicit challenge the small screen presents to a competing medium—the theater—he addresses the covert challenge TV makes to us all: to use language and reason to connect the dots behind the shimmering images.

Joshua Meyrowitz is a professor of communication at the University of New Hampshire. His award-winning book, No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior *(Oxford University Press) was recently published in paperback. This essay is based on a speech he delivered to a national conference of the Theatre Communications Group.*

Television is not something that serious artists and intellectuals like to talk much about, except to dismiss it or attack it. When we do talk about it, we tend to focus on the content. We talk about good shows and bad shows. We say things such as: "I only watch the news"; "I watch only educational television"; or "What a piece of junk that program is!"

But to reduce television to a cultural nuisance, to a slickly disguised salesman, is to miss what is happening in our culture because of television, and what television—not through its content, but as a certain form of experience—does to those intellectual and artistic endeavors we may hold dear. It is television as an *environment* that is shaping and reshaping national character and contemporary patterns of feeling and thought.

In 1950, only nine percent of American households owned television sets. By 1977, the figure had risen to 98 percent, matching the use of indoor plumbing. On average, households keep the set on 50 hours a week. Individually, Americans watch an average of 30 hours a week. There are very few things that people do more than they watch television. We begin peering at TV through the bars of cribs and continue looking at it through cataracts of old age. Television is the context within which most of us perceive the world, within which we think about politics, about entertainment, about news, about almost everything, including drama and theater.

Whether we like it or not, playwrights who want to reach a broad audience are writing for a television audience—not that their plays must be produced on TV, but rather that most people's views of social life, the world and appropriate ways of thinking, behaving and reacting have all been affected by their experience with television.

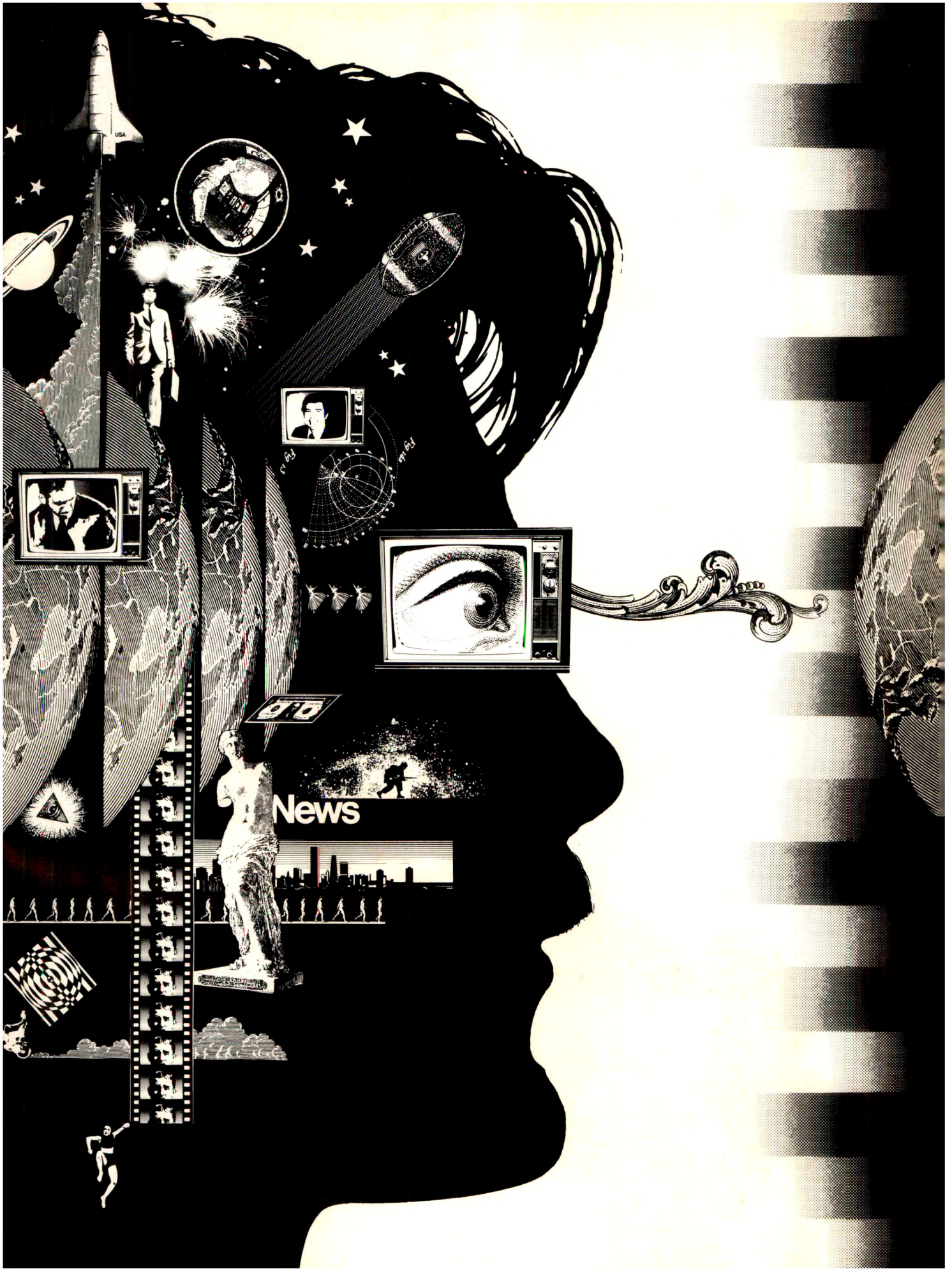
Ironically, while TV is the new context within which we experience so many things, TV itself fosters contextless and placeless experiences. Television breaks the age-old connection between the places we are in and what we can experience and see with our own eyes. With television, we no longer simply live in our homes or in our communities. Many of us now pay more attention to, and talk more about, terrorism in the Mideast, starvation in Africa, a teacher killed in the explosion of the space shuttle, fires or mud slides in other states and the latest political scandal than the troubles of nearly anyone except perhaps a handful of close family, friends and colleagues.

Television has become our largest shared arena. When a friend sings exquisitely, we no longer say, "You should sing in our church," but rather, "You should be on television." Our funniest friends are wished an appearance on a television comedy show, not a performance at the town hall.

Among the effects of this phenomenon is that we have lost the old isolated experience of "local talent." Every actor, singer, magician and comedian is now compared—not to one's other neighbors and friends—

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Illustration by John Pack


USA
News

We have become accustomed to responding to images. We 'watch' television, rather than 'listen' to it. We 'feel' good or bad about, rather than 'think' about its arguments and language.

but to a handful of superstars, an almost impossible condition of comparison.

The United States' early Presidents were seen by only a few of the voters of their day; now it is impossible to imagine a candidate who has not visited every voter on television. And so it is that politicians, salespeople and terrorists all design their messages to capture the television eye.

Television has joined the marketplace and the street corner as another environment to be observed, but not necessarily identified with. With TV there is little personal investment. Watching is convenient and easy. We don't have to travel to a theater or expend any of the energy needed for reading. Ironically, the lack of personal association with TV content allows for the most widespread sharing of similar experience in the history of civilization. It is not unusual for a person to watch a TV show avidly and yet comment, "I can't believe people watch this stuff!" or, "What's the world coming to!"

Television's rapid and widespread invasion has transformed the relative place of theater in society. The television arena challenges the theater, not just by filling people's leisure time, not just by offering inexpensive and convenient alternatives to traveling to a theater and paying for a ticket, not just by cheapening tastes, but by altering our sense of public discourse, by changing the dividing line between drama and reality, by altering the ways in which we perceive created social reality and by changing the social backdrop against which theater is performed.

Cultural commentators have suggested that the theater's vulnerability to censorship grows out of its use of language to make its points. This same reliance on language is what makes the theater so vulnerable to the *implicit* censorship of television. The massive saturation of television has deadened us to language. We have become accustomed to responding to images. We *watch* television, rather than *listen* to it. We *feel* good or bad about, rather than *think* about its arguments and language.

On television, even political debates have very little to do with words and arguments, and much to do with image and style. Few people respond to a television debate by saying, "That was a good argument," or, "That's historically inaccurate." Much more common is a reaction such as: "I don't trust him"; "I like her!"; "He looks nervous"; "He's doing very well"; "Look at those bags under his eyes."

Why do we respond to TV emotionally rather than rationally? One reason is the sense of intimacy and closeness that television simulates. We experience people on television as if they are not more than a meter away from us. Even in real life, that is an emotional, personal distance—a distance of seduction or threat, not of discussion. When we are on a date, for example, we often pay little attention to what our companion says. The words, "I had a very nice time," or, "That was a good movie," don't tell us much. So we focus on other things. Is the other person looking us in the eyes? How close to us is she standing? Does he seem nervous? Similarly, in the intimate, simulated space of television we focus on image, gesture, style.

Attention to words increases with the distance the hearer is from the speaker. We need to have at least two to three meters of distance to focus closely on words and stop giving our primary attention to the personal being of the speaker. Ten meters would be even better.

In the theater, audiences usually have enough distance from the actors to pay serious attention to what's being said. In the television close-up, we tend to focus on personality.

It is common to hear that "a picture is worth a thousand words," but it is a very misleading saying because it suggests that words and images can be equated with, and translated into, each other. Actually, words and pictures are two completely different types of symbols that are apparently produced and perceived by different hemispheres of the brain in most people. All human interaction involves these two different types of symbols: languagelike communication and imagelike expression. Expressions include gestures, signs, vocalizations and movements produced by the mere presence of a person in an environment. Expressions are like pictures without captions. They are more direct and more ambiguous, more natural yet less precise than linguistic statements.

Expressions come directly from a person; they suggest how a person really feels and what he or she is really like. Yet one cannot base a contract on a smile, a wink or a chuckle. Unless words are used to explain expressions,

their meanings are often ambiguous.

Language offers things that images can't provide: long, sequential lines of argument, if-then relationships, syllogistic analyses and propositions that can be proven true or false. Further, while expressions are always limited to telling us something about the expressor, words in a book or a monologue in a play can be about events in other countries, activities that took place in the past or are planned for the future, or unobservable abstractions.

Ideas live through language, not through expressions and images. One can show a picture of a big statue, but the idea of "liberty" needs to be discussed in language.

It is not surprising that drama or comedy programs or advertisements would want to circumvent rationality, but it is upsetting to realize that television news and documentaries often do the same. Transcripts of TV newscasts often contain surprisingly little linguistic information. A microphone and camera thrust in the face of an airplane-crash survivor yield very little *communicated* information, but they offer viewers a rich source of *expressions*. Similarly, precious seconds of air time are often used on local news shows for friendly bantering among the newscasters. The quips and interchanges are almost always low-level *communications*, but they are meaningful *expressions*. They are intended to make the viewer feel that the newscasters are "nice people" and that they are each other's friends off the set.

Word communications and expressions have completely different strengths and weaknesses, and until recently, they each reigned supreme in different realms of society. While expressions have an important role to play in personal, private relationships, they are severely limited as a form of public argument and discussion.

Television has brought about a blurring of these two forms of interaction. We now respond to public events and people in terms of their personal appearance, gesture and emotion.

Recent polls show that many people will vote for a candidate they diagree with on the issues because they say they like the candidate personally. This dichotomy of response to personality and stands on the issues makes sense only in a television culture. If we read a candidate's speeches in a newspaper, it would be insane for us to say, "This is all nonsense, but you know something, I like the guy." Such a reaction only makes sense when we feel we have met and "know" our leaders personally. And television gives us that feeling.

Few people can be masters of both expression and communication. Thomas Jefferson was a beautiful and clear writer, and he has been considered by many to be the most intelligent U.S. President. But he would not make a very good TV President. He had a slight speech impediment, and he was voted the homeliest student at William and Mary College. Worst of all, he disliked speaking in public so much that he never addressed Congress in person; instead he sent his State of the Union speeches to Congress to be read by a clerk.

The emotional, charismatic reaction to TV hurts theater in two ways. Not only does the loss of interest in language hurt drama, but it was once the case that theater held an edge over real life, and over poetry and literature, in terms of fleshing out public characters. An actor would literally "give a body" to types of people we could *not* watch so closely in real life. People from different walks of life—kings and paupers, famous people, living and dead—would be brought to life for us by the theater.

But now the standard by which we measure theater's distance or closeness, its verisimilitude or distortion, is not real life, but television and other electronic media. And on TV, we experience people at a simulated intimate distance. Theater suddenly seems more distant than reality—a reality that is composed of vicarious interactions with our many media friends.

The more we see and hear them, the more performers, newscasters, politicians, talk-show hosts and subjects of the news become part of our extended network of friends. Some of them are there to say "good morning" to us; others come to say "good night." They speak to us as we eat dinner and sing in our ears as we jog. We see their nervous twitches and the twinkles in their eyes. We are aware of their colds and haircuts, their good days and their bad days. Through television, we develop a sense of intimacy with those who were once distant. We come to feel that we really know a John Lennon or a Christa McAuliffe, the teacher-astronaut who died when the space shuttle *Challenger* exploded. We feel we've met their family members and understand who they are as people.

Hence the difficulty today of writing a play about someone like Christa McAuliffe. On the day of the accident, millions of people felt they knew Christa, that she was *their* friend, *their* neighbor, *their* teacher. Many people would rather see a documentary drawing on actual news footage than see an actress portraying Christa. And when such media friends are portrayed in biographical plays or "docu-dramas," it makes more sense to many people to experience the drama on TV rather than in a theater, because watching it on TV is closer to the original "real experience"—that of seeing the people and events on television.

Even in nonfiction and history, there has always been dramatic reconstruction of people's lives. We forget some things about people and invent others. Thomas Jefferson's speech impediment or Abraham Lincoln's high, squeaky voice are rarely mentioned or re-created, and we made up stories about George Washington

cutting down the cherry tree. But such forgetting and inventing depend on not having a detailed visual and aural record of people. By giving us visual and aural memories and "realistic" video records, TV has narrowed the range of believable dramatic re-creation.

But *is* television reality? Of course not. Television is a construction and reconstruction of reality. And here is another problem for traditional theater. It might be said that theater was once a commentary on society or reality. But to have a separate commentary there must be a perceptible line between reality and theater, between fiction and nonfiction, between action and comments on actions. And television has increasingly blurred the line between what we perceive to be drama and what we perceive to be reality.

Even news shows on television are constructed fictions, with electronically meshed images that take place not in the real world, but only on television. Often when TV interviewer Ted Koppel speaks with three guests on a live program such as "Nightline"—a seemingly real event—the event exists only on television. Koppel and the three guests are not in the same place; their conversation is a dramatic construction played on the stage of television. Or to push this further, what is the nature of the reality of hostage-taking when the event is designed by both hostage-takers and journalists to make good TV drama?

Perhaps it is because of our subconscious awareness of the construction of reality on TV that we use the word *drama* so loosely to refer to almost everything on TV: a hostage drama, a dramatic confrontation on "Nightline," a dramatic new discovery in fighting cancer. On television, not only does reality become drama, but drama becomes reality. When a program such as "Roots" appears on television, everyone realizes that it is fiction, not reality. But the widespread knowledge of the program—and of all the discussions of it on news and talk shows, in schools and at work—transforms it into a real social "event."

Another way that television blurs the difference between theater and reality is that it has made us all more aware of the dramatic structure of everyday life, making the theater seem less special. Americans were once relatively unaware of the staging of presidential roles, for example. They were distant from the President and his advisers; they saw only the "onstage view" of the President. Many people lived through 12 years of Franklin Roosevelt's Presidency without being aware that his legs were crippled and that he carefully controlled his onstage image. In revealing more, television demands more manipulation and control—and yet the new media reveal so much that they also make the President's need for control and advice more visible.

The new hyper-awareness of "life-as-drama" has made us all more suspicious of theatrical "role-players," and less comfortable with boldly drawn characters both in real life and on the stage. The more we are aware of the backstage machinations of everyone from presidential candidates to television evangelists, the less willing we are to grant the theater its lifeblood: suspension of disbelief.

Television doesn't simply expose some of the former backstages of life and then leave the culture; it stays around to absorb and transmit the result. TV is an ever-present dynamo that reprocesses our culture. It brings about structural changes, then the changes are reported on TV as news, then the changes move into soap operas and TV dramas and situation comedies, which leads to further backstage exposures, which bring about further changes, which are reported on the news, and so on. So TV is a tightly wound spiral of change that winds backward on itself as it thrusts us forward into an unknown and bewildering future.

Television's rapid and continuous reworking of our culture presents another challenge to theater by changing the social backdrop to drama. Theater depends on fiction being separate from reality not only to encourage audiences to enter a theater but also for the construction of a meaningful drama in the first place. It is much easier to comment on a relatively stable outside world, where everything and everybody has its place. Writers and directors need things to stand somewhat still for a generation, at least a decade—at the barest minimum, a few years. Otherwise by the time a book or play about the culture appears, the culture may have changed. But TV fosters a continuously changing present.

The constant reprocessing of our culture and behavior through television makes it more difficult to have timely commentary in theater, fiction and poetry. The target moves too quickly to take careful aim. Every six months there is a new set of "in" terms, "in" people, hot topics, along with a new set of taboos—words and topics that are now seen as overdone, sexist, racist or simply passé.

One of the things that makes television so compelling is that it seems to be an all-purpose medium of entertainment, commentary and news, with events that unfold before our very eyes. It has its own internal system of cross-reference, where the news refers to new fictional programs and fictional programs reflect recently reported news events. This unfolding and cross-referencing gives us the sense of television being in the "present tense"—anything can happen at any moment. In contrast, a movie or a book—and, ironically, even a live dramatic performance—seems canned by comparison, in the "past tense."

Theater was once an obviously richer, denser form of experience than ordinary moments of living; now the differences are more subtle. The impact of dramatic timing is diluted as the rush of outside media events beckons.

We talk about the influence of television in terms of our 'declining attention span,' but it is more complex than that. There has been a change in our sense of appropriate and normal experience. We have come to expect quickly shifting multidimensional stimuli.

The impact of a drama is dependent on the isolation of the audience from *other* settings, from *other* actions, from *other* words. Every phrase, movement, prop and lighting effect is designed to contribute to a cohesive definition of the situation: of a tragedy or comedy, of a time past or present, of a certain set of characters, in a specific matrix of time and space coordinates. The play is meant to be the totality of the audience's experience. The audience can, of course, draw on earlier experiences to understand and interpret the drama, but the only new input is supposed to emanate from the theatrical production and all its visual and aural elements.

Nothing could be further from the spirit of television than such a place-bound experience. We don't interact with television in a darkened room to the exclusion of other activities. One recent study found that most people watch TV while doing other things: eating, playing, washing the dishes, talking on the telephone, reading, arguing or even making love. More than a third of viewers of a typical hour-long TV program do not watch the program to the end, and about 40 percent search for another program during commercial breaks.

Cable TV, with its dozens of channels, and video-cassette recorders have further splintered time and space. A program recorded on videotape can be stopped, raced forward or pushed backward. Wireless remote channel controls allow for convenient travel through 40 or more channels, 40 or more different psychological spaces, without ever rising from one's couch. The newest generation of television sets even permits the viewing of two or more stations simultaneously, with smaller pictures inset in the corners of the screens. All this is more supportive of three-ring circuses than of traditional drama.

We often talk about this influence of television in terms of the simplistic complaint that people, especially children, have "declining attention spans," but it is much more complex and pervasive than that. There has been a basic change in the sense of appropriate and normal experience. We have come to expect quickly shifting multidimensional stimuli.

The director of a university creative-writing program complained to me recently about television's impact on writing, but then he added that when he attends a sports event these days, the live experience often feels flat, distant and thinly textured. He can't see the players close-up, he can't view the field from a quick succession of multiple angles, he can't relive actions through instant replays. Theatergoers no doubt feel some of these same things: that theater is limited, thin, unidimensional. Our experience with TV makes us hunger for more. To sit in a theater for two hours is, for many people, to be cut off from numerous other potential experiences.

What can the theater do to respond to the invasion of television? I'm afraid it is easier to describe some of the difficulties than to offer simple solutions. Certainly, it seems unlikely that people will stop watching television or stop using all the other electronic media, new and old, that give us a sense of placelessness and multiple-layered stimuli.

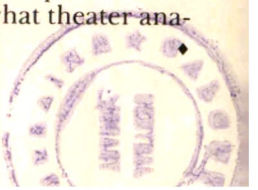
At the same time, it would be a mistake to try to ignore television and its effects. It would also be a mistake to abdicate to television's multimedia shows or visual/aural extravaganzas.

Rather than ignoring or giving in to TV, perhaps artists need to confront television more directly by helping us gain insight into the television experience. Their most powerful tool in this regard is the word. Language can dissect our experience with television.

Television images are produced by thousands of flashing dots that we perceive in a sensual gestalt. Drama and poetry—because of their reliance on language—are capable of connecting the dots.

We do not usually see links between the elements on television. We tend not to notice the connection between the programs and the commercials. We don't see contradictions: how the news report on pollution of underground water may be related to the manufacture of the products of the news show's sponsors.

Theater can help us to think about such things. The TV-dominated electronic landscape is one that affects almost everyone in society, yet TV isn't very good at commenting on itself. Theater can fill the void. It can challenge us to think about TV by making the television environment a "character" in drama and by making the shared experiences of television part of what theater analyzes and dissects. ◆



SAVING THE OZONE

In September 1987 representatives of 31 nations met in Montreal and signed an agreement that takes an important first step toward the solution of a grave international problem. Once it has been ratified, the Montreal treaty will limit the use of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), man-made chemicals that are believed to be destroying the Earth's ozone layer.

Ozone, a deep blue gas made up of chemically bonded oxygen atoms, is found everywhere in the atmosphere. In the air we breathe, ozone is a health hazard, a constituent of air pollution that has a caustic effect on human lungs. However, in the atmosphere's upper layer, the stratosphere, ozone forms a layer, thin in some places, thick in others, that is our only natural protection from the most damaging ultraviolet radiation of the sun. Exposure to large amounts of ultraviolet radiation has been associated with an increased risk of skin cancer and eye damage in human beings and with changes in the immune systems of animals. Scientists believe that increases in ultraviolet radiation could cause untold other changes in plant and animal life.

Ironically, CFCs were once considered ideal industrial chemicals because they are nontoxic, nonflammable and highly stable. Since their invention in 1928, they have been used to cool refrigerators and air-conditioners, propel aerosol sprays, clean computer chips, and make foam rubber and the polystyrene containers common in food packaging. The first intimations of an environmental problem with chlorofluorocarbons came in the late 1960s, when the British chemist James Lovelock developed a device that detected airborne CFCs. To his surprise, one of his devices on a ship sailing in the Southern Hemisphere found traces of CFCs, far from any major release point. CFCs, once released into the atmosphere, apparently never disappear. They seem instead to spread indefinitely, mingling with other molecules in the air until they are dispersed over the globe.

Soon after Lovelock presented his data, in the early 1970s, Sherwood Rowland, chairman of the chemistry department at the University of California at Irvine, and Mario Molina, then a postdoctoral fellow in Rowland's department, began to investigate what happens to CFCs in the atmosphere. Applying their understanding of atmospheric chemistry to Lovelock's data, Rowland and Molina quickly realized they were studying a potentially devastating environmental problem. As Rowland says, "I came home one night and told my wife, 'The work is going very well, but it looks like the end of the world.' "

In 1974 Rowland and Molina reported that CFCs were being added to the atmosphere in steadily increasing amounts. At that time annual production of the compounds in the United States alone was over 380 million kilograms. CFCs, according to their theory, remain intact in the atmosphere for 50 to 100 years, slowly drifting into the stratosphere, 12 to 50 kilometers above the Earth's surface. There, intense ultraviolet radiation severs the compounds' chemical bonds, releasing chlorine atoms in a catalytic chain reaction that threatens stratospher-

The diagram at right illustrates how a layer of ozone in the stratosphere protects the Earth by blocking the sun's most harmful ultraviolet radiation. As CFCs destroy the ozone layer, ultraviolet radiation reaches the Earth in increasingly dangerous amounts.

© 1987 NASA and Ryszard Horowitz. Diagram by Cynthia Davis for *Sports Illustrated*

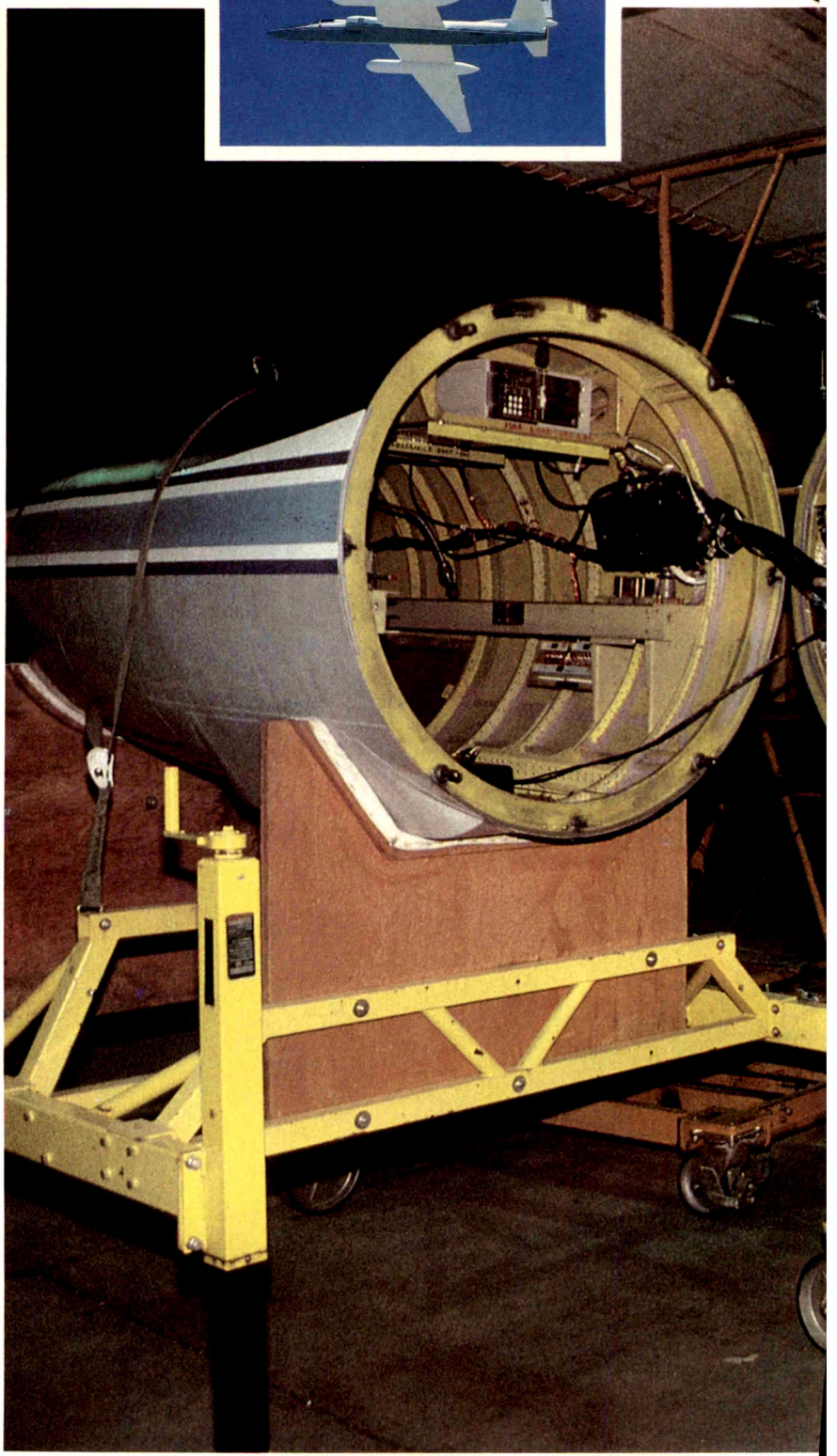
ic ozone (see diagram on page 70). Rowland and Molina calculated that "for every chlorine atom you release, 100,000 molecules of ozone are removed from the atmosphere."

Rowland and Molina's theory was controversial among atmospheric scientists, and public reaction to their research was muted. "People were used to visual images," Rowland says. "This lake is poisoned. Those trees are dead. [With the ozone theory] you had to say to yourself, 'Do I really believe this?'" Prompted by the accumulating evidence against CFCs, the United States, Canada, Sweden, Norway and Denmark banned the chemicals in aerosol sprays. The industrial nations that produce CFCs also signed a protocol in Vienna that established the framework for an international agreement on the chemicals. For many scientists, however, Rowland and Molina's work remained theory without empirical data to back it up. Studies sponsored by the National Academy of Sciences concluded that their predictions were overstated. The safety of CFCs faded as a public issue, though it continued to be an area of concern to environmentalists.

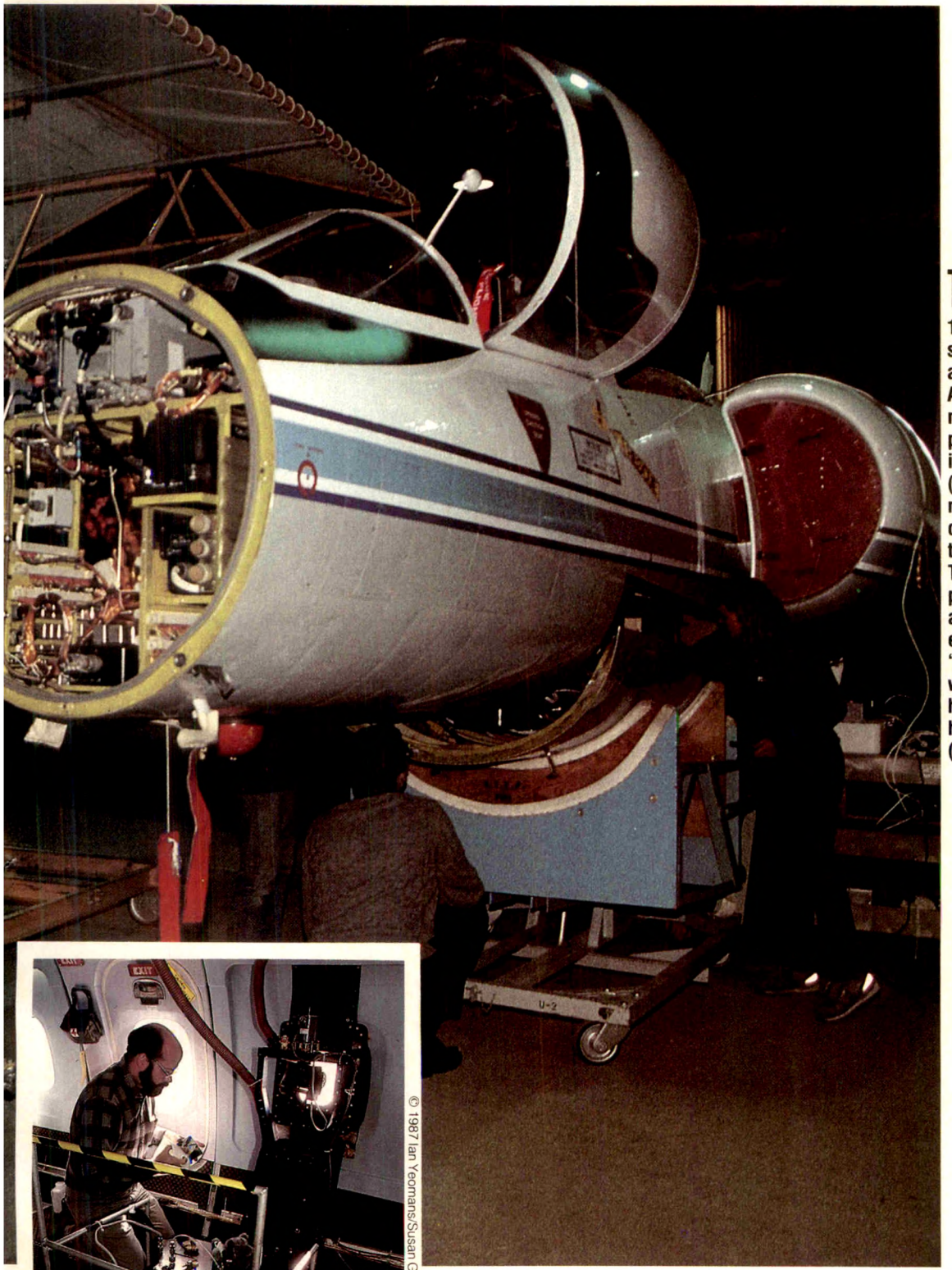
In 1985, startling reports of a "hole" in the ozone layer over the South Pole revived the issue. Researchers working for the British Antarctic Survey had noticed a decrease of more than 40 percent in the ozone layer every September and October, starting in 1977. Joseph Farman, leader of the team, was baffled. "It was perfectly clear," he says, "that what we had found contradicted all the existing models of stratospheric ozone depletion." Reassured that data collected by America's National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Nimbus 7 satellite in the same part of the atmosphere showed no such dramatic drop in ozone, Farman initially ascribed his team's findings to instrument or human error. But when measurements taken at another station 1600 kilometers away corroborated his data, Farman decided that he must report the findings. Farman's paper, published in May 1985, stunned atmospheric scientists. Susan Solomon, a chemist with the aeronomy laboratory of the National Oceanic

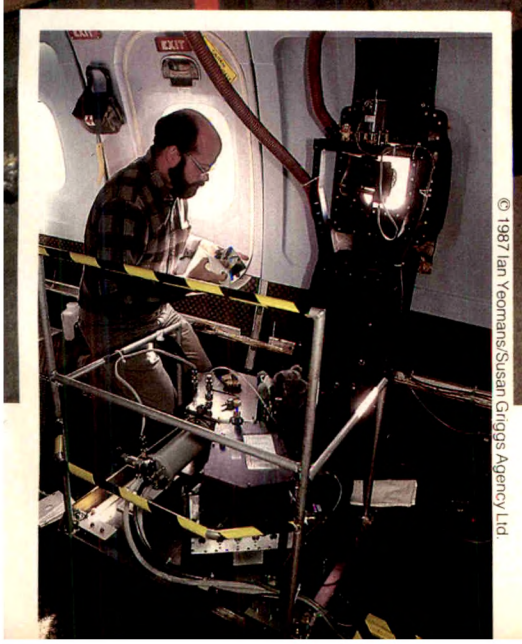
Lockheed-California Co.





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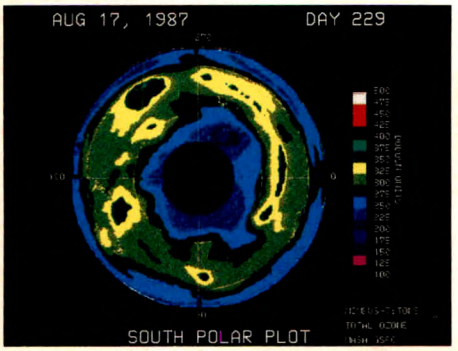




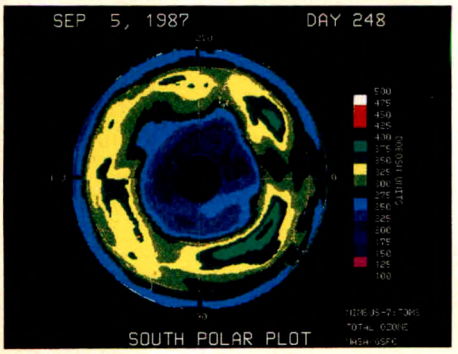
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The ER-2 research plane (top inset) made 12 flights into the stratosphere over the South Pole as part of the Airborne Antarctic Ozone Experiment. Pods on the plane's wings and bays in its nose and fuselage (center) carried instruments that gathered data on the chemical composition of the ozone layer. The expedition's second plane, a DC-8, served as a flying laboratory, enabling researchers to "look" through a quartz window into the ozone hole from altitudes as high as 10,000 meters (bottom inset).

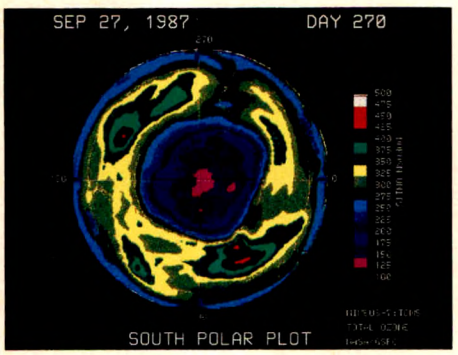
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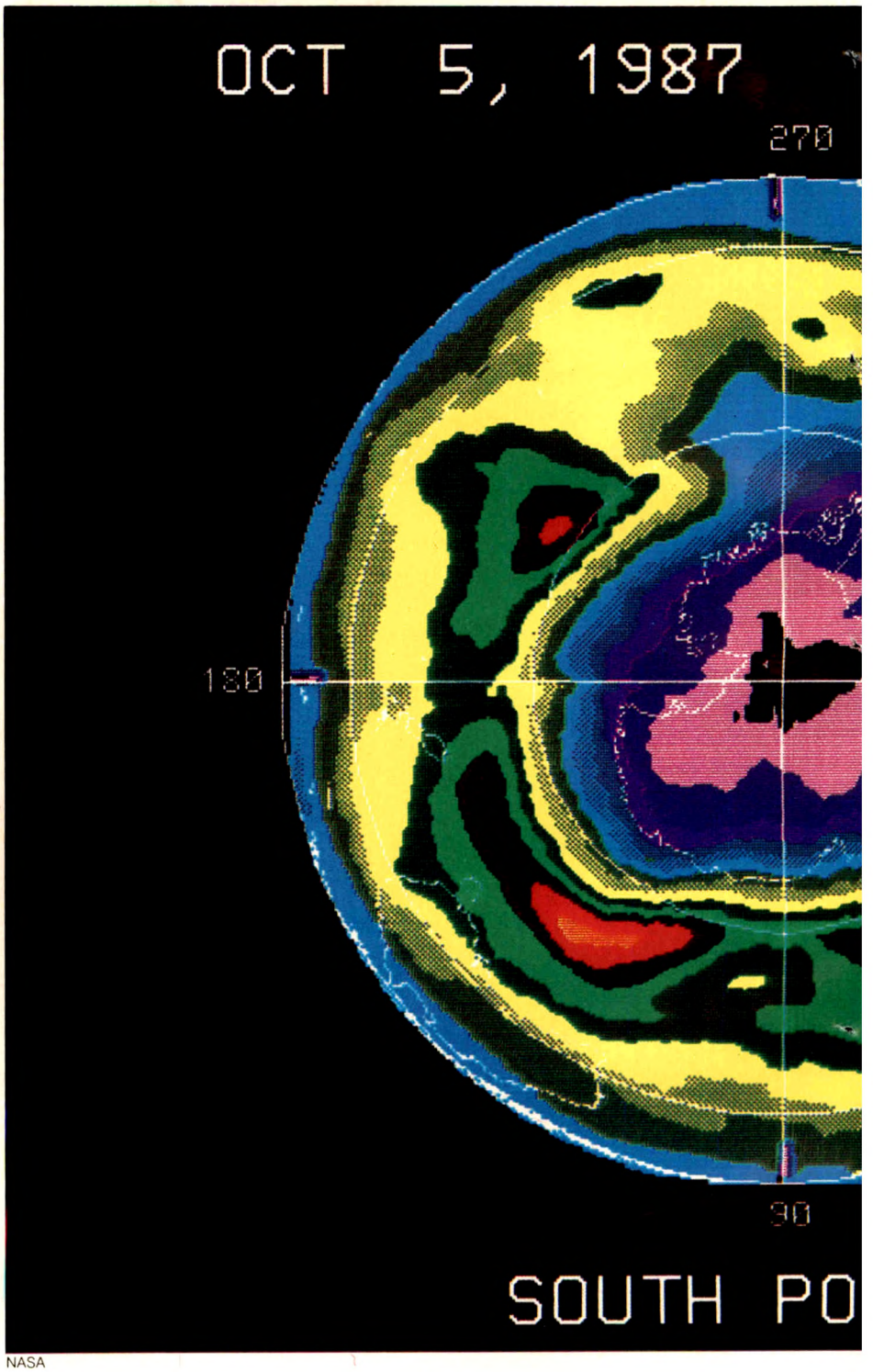
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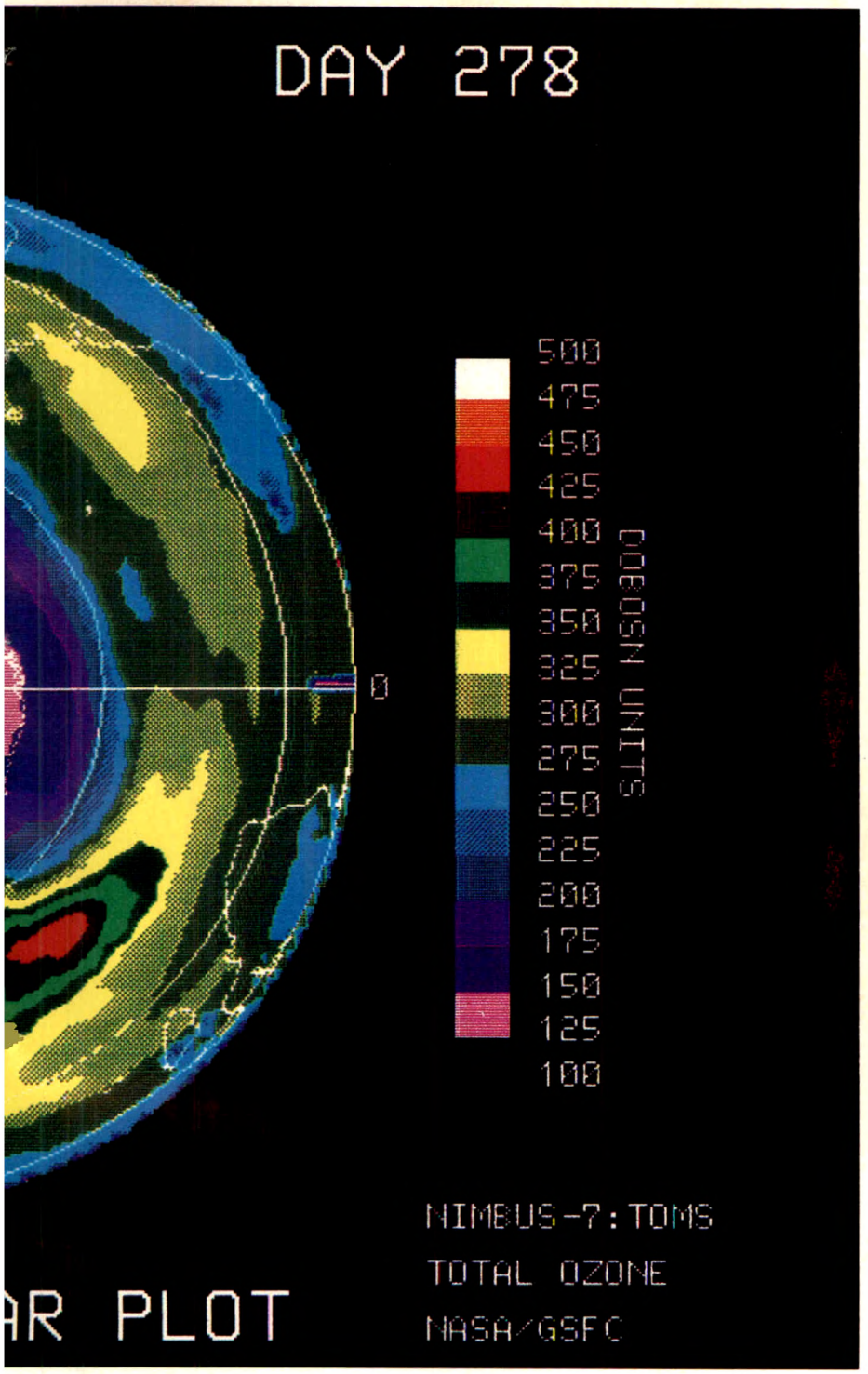
NASA



Satellite maps of the ozone layer in the stratosphere over Antarctica from August to October 1987 track the growth of the ozone hole, the area shown in black, pink and purple. The amount of ozone in this area is about half the level of 10 years ago. These maps are based on data gathered by the Total Ozone Mapping Spectrometer on board the NASA Nimbus 7 satellite.



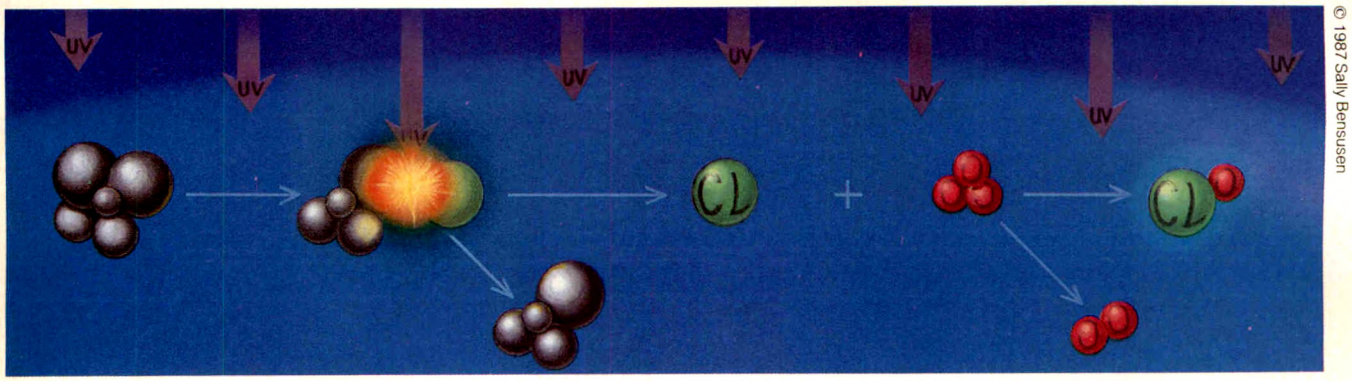
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and Atmospheric Agency (NOAA), remembers thinking, "This is probably one of the most important things that's ever been seen in the stratosphere, if it's right." Rechecking data from Nimbus 7, NASA confirmed Farman's findings. The drop in ozone during the Antarctic spring was so steep and unexpected that computers receiving Nimbus 7's data had set the results aside as an aberration. Most alarming, the satellite data showed the hole widening each year, gradually stretching to the tip of South America.

Still, confirmation of the ozone hole was not necessarily an indictment of CFCs. The stratosphere over Antarctica is unlike any other section of the Earth's atmosphere. It is dominated by the polar vortex, a tight whirlpool of winds. When the vortex breaks up every November, the region is replenished by ozone-rich air from other parts of the stratosphere. Some scientists speculated that these atmospheric winds or other cyclical weather effects could explain the hole.

In August 1986, Susan Solomon led a hastily assembled team of scientists, sponsored by the National Science Foundation, to go to Antarctica and conduct the first thorough analysis of the continent's stratosphere. The expedition's experiments strongly suggested that CFCs played a role in the destruction of stratospheric ozone. Further discussions among the industrialized nations and the United Nations Environment Program, following the Solomon expedition, paved the way for the Montreal treaty. U.S. negotiators at Montreal initially sought an immediate freeze on CFC production, followed by a 95 percent reduction to be phased in over a number of years. Instead, the treaty signed calls for a freeze on production at 1986 levels beginning in 1990, followed by a 50 percent reduction in CFC emissions by the end of the century. Many developing nations, in need of inexpensive refrigeration, are exempt from these limits for 10 years. Cass Peterson, a journalist who covers environmental issues for *The Washington Post*, underlines the importance of the Montreal treaty: "Imperfect as it is, the agreement is historic. It is the first inter-



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This diagram shows the chemical reaction that contributes to the ozone hole. Ultraviolet radiation (UV) breaks the CFC molecule's tight chemical bonds, freeing a chlorine atom (Cl) which in turn attacks an ozone molecule (O_3) to form oxygen (O_2) and chlorine monoxide (ClO). The chlorine monoxide molecule is eventually split by an oxygen atom, creating oxygen and a freed chlorine atom, beginning the cycle of destruction again.

national effort to control an air pollutant, a tacit acknowledgment that no nation by itself can protect the global resources on which all nations rely. It is also the first time that an international agreement has been reached without evidence of ground-level environmental damage."

By the unanimous vote of the Senate in March 1988, the United States became the first major producer and consumer of CFCs to ratify the treaty. The agreement will take effect January 1, 1989, if it has been ratified by 11 countries that consume two-thirds of the world's CFCs; the United States represents 30 percent of world consumption, the European Community 30 percent, and Japan 10 to 15 percent.

Meanwhile, research efforts continue. At the same time the negotiators were working in Montreal, 150 scientists from the United States, Great Britain, France, Argentina and Chile met in Puntas Arenas, Chile, to conduct the most ambitious ozone study yet, the Airborne Antarctic Ozone Experiment. This experiment, which determined that the ozone hole was at its largest in 1987, involved not only satellite-based measuring devices and meteorological balloons but also airborne laboratories. A DC-8 passenger plane was converted to accommodate more than 40 scientists and technicians, becoming in effect a flying lab that could cruise for as long as 18 hours at altitudes of up to 10 kilometers.

The most crucial information, however, was gathered by one of several experiments actually carried into the ozone layer by the ER-2, a plane more closely resembling a rocket with glider wings. After the Solomon expedition in 1986, Robert Watson, acting director of NASA's atmospheric-research program, asked Harvard's James Anderson to design a device that would measure atmospheric chlorine monoxide, a key marker for CFC-caused ozone depletion. The instruments Anderson developed fit snugly into a pod on the ER-2's wing. During August and September 1987, the ER-2 made 12 trips into the stratosphere over Antarctica, collecting and analyzing samples of air from altitudes of up to 17 kilometers.

By October 1987, a chemical picture of the Antarctic atmosphere was coming into focus as a result of these experiments. As the chlorine-monoxide level rises steadily throughout August and September, it reaches 500 times normal concentration at certain altitudes and ozone levels drop precipitously. At the same time, the ozone hole seems to fluctuate with the continent's unique atmospheric conditions. "The conditions in Antarctica are like hitting the fast-forward button on ozone depletion," NOAA's Daniel Albritton says. "Few are saying that Antarctica is symptomatic of what will happen everywhere. The question is: could it occur at one tenth that rate?"

There is already some evidence of damage to the ozone layer in the Northern Hemisphere. A study released in March 1988, in which more than 100 scientists from U.S. and United Nations agencies analyzed ozone data gathered by satellite- and ground-based instruments, found that atmospheric ozone in the range of 30 to 60 degrees north latitude—a band that includes the most heavily populated areas of the United States, Canada, Europe, the Soviet Union, China and Japan—has decreased between 1.7 and 3.0 percent over the last 17 years. Scientists now generally accept the theory that man-made chemicals are the cause of the decrease. John Gille, a geophysicist with the National Center for Atmospheric Research, describes these most recent findings as "the corpse." For the first time, he says, "we have a really definitive answer that ozone has decreased. We understand that it is going on and we can predict it will be much more severe in the future."

Because CFCs remain in the atmosphere for several decades, damage to the ozone layer will continue long after the Montreal treaty takes effect. Some scientists and environmentalists believe that the international community should consider invoking a provision of the treaty that calls for member nations to reconvene if scientific evidence shows that the agreement is insufficient to protect the ozone layer. Lee M. Thomas, administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, says that the findings of the new study will be discussed during an assessment of the global ozone situation scheduled under the treaty for 1990. "The crucial first step, however," Thomas stresses, "is international ratification of the Montreal protocol." ♦

REVIEWS

HISTORY

Learning from the Past

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE GREAT POWERS: ECONOMIC CHANGE AND MILITARY CONFLICT FROM 1500 TO 2000. By Paul Kennedy. *Random House. 677 pp.*

Reviewed by Michael Howard

The idea that we can learn from history is one professional historians usually abjure. They leave it to politicians to pluck apparent analogies—Munich, Sarajevo—from the past, and consider it a point of honor to demonstrate how inappropriate they are. They let political scientists discern and explain regularities and patterns in the past. They distance themselves from the exceptional prophets, like Arnold Toynbee, who emerge from their own ranks. They prefer to emphasize the uniqueness of past events, the different value systems of past societies, the need to purge oneself from contemporary preoccupations before studying the past, and they claim no more than that history can give us a sense of balance and perspective, making us, in 19th-century Swiss historian Jacob Burckhardt's words, "not clever for next time, but wise forever."

Paul Kennedy, professor of history at Yale University, has broken ranks with his colleagues. In a work of almost Toynbeean sweep he describes a pattern of past development that is not only directly relevant to our times but is clearly intended to be read by policy makers. *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* is, as Kennedy states, a book that can be read on at least two levels. On the one hand it presents a clearly defined and closely reasoned thesis explaining the subject matter of the title—why nations rise and fall, and why the process is still continuing. On the other, in order to provide the data for his thesis, Kennedy gives a clearly written and fairly uncontentious history of the rise and fall of Europe and its empires. He unashamedly endorses the view of the German historian Leopold von Ranke that history is fundamentally about high politics, and that politicians will be better at their jobs if they understand the historical processes of which they form part.

Kennedy expands his thesis in the introduction and epilogue. It can be easily summarized: the more states increase their power, the larger the proportion of their resources they devote to maintaining it. If too large a proportion of national resources is diverted to military purposes, this in the long run leads to a weakening of power. The capacity to sustain a conflict with a comparable state or coalition of states ultimately depends on economic strength.

Kennedy may be accused of the fault against which historians warn their pupils: seeing the past through the perspective of the present. It is nonetheless true that contemporary concerns often alert us to aspects of the past that previous historians have overlooked. In the hands of a political pamphleteer seeking evidence to prove a case such an approach is a corruption of history, but when a scholar as careful and learned as Kennedy is prompted by contemporary issues to reexamine the great processes of the past, the result can only be an enhancement of our historical understanding and a fresh enlightenment of the problems of our own time. Further, when the study is written as simply and attractively as this work is, its publication may have a great and beneficent impact.

Kennedy clearly sets out his pattern of overextension and decline. At the beginning of the 16th century, Spain, the first great European power, inherited vast commitments in Europe and overseas. In spite of the excellence of Spain's armed forces, defending those commitments involved expenditure on a scale that could not be met from Spain's own mismanaged resources and had to be met by an

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Spain reaches for empire: Columbus claims the New World.

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ultimately lethal mixture of deficit budgeting and inflation. Spain's preponderance lasted as long as it did only because her principal adversary, France, mismanaged her resources even more badly.

By the end of the 17th century, however, France had developed a system of bureaucratic and military management that enabled her to exploit her economic resources to such military effect that it required a coalition of all other European powers to prevent her establishing a permanent hegemony over the Continent. Then France in her turn became overextended, her economy unable to support increasingly expensive regular armed forces, until her participation in the American Revolutionary War created the bankruptcy that led to the French Revolution.

France's major adversary was England, and England's strength lay not in her military but in her economic capabilities. A virtuous circle was built up throughout the 18th century; a powerful trading system engendered the credit necessary to pay for a navy that protected and extended that trading system and destroyed those of adversaries. It was this process, combined with skillful political management, that enabled Great Britain to emerge from the Napoleonic Wars as by far the most powerful country in the world—despite her minimal military contribution to the wars, at least to those on land.

But by the end of the 19th century Britain had lost her economic lead, saw herself increasingly threatened, and was having to devote increasing resources to the navy on which her ascendancy rested. When British ascendancy was tested by the rising power of Germany in a prolonged war, it could be maintained only by a huge increase in both internal and external indebtedness and by the liquidation of substantial overseas assets. Only the support of the United States made possible the Allied victory in World War I. Once that support was withdrawn, Britain found that she could not possibly pay for the control and protection of her extended imperial possessions. The decision taken in 1939 to increase defense expenditure to a size commensurate with her political responsibilities bankrupted her within 18 months.

Britain's ascendancy had in fact been maintained not only by her economic power but by the political skill with which her elites had maintained domestic consensus at home and found necessary allies abroad. Kennedy's stress on political skill is important, since it keeps his thesis from being crudely determinist. It was the absence of shrewd political leadership that was so fatal to post-Bismarckian Germany. Bismarck and his contemporaries created a political structure that enabled the Germans economically and politically to dominate the Continent. But it was a structure that from the outset failed to create consensus at home, and in the hands of Bismarck's maladroit successors it was perceived as a threat by all Germany's neighbors. An economic determinist writing in 1890 might have predicted that, given Germany's economic strength, her hegemony of Europe was inevitable and that she would emerge in the 20th century as a world power on the level of the United States.

That she failed to achieve this manifest destiny but instead led the Continent into two utterly destructive wars can be attributed only to appalling political mismanagement. Germany's combination of economic strength and military effectiveness would have been enough, in World War I, to defeat her European adversaries, had she not deliberately provoked the hostility of the United States, a power against whose economic strength she had no hope of prevailing in a long struggle. Defeat in World War I still left Germany the strongest economic power on the European continent. But her crash rearmament program in the 1930s equipped her only for a series of ad hoc campaigns for which, like Napoleon before her, she made her defeated enemies pay. Not until 1942 did she begin seriously to mobilize her economic resources, and by then it was too late; she was now faced by two adversaries, the Soviet Union and the United States, whose strength far outclassed her own. There was nothing foreordained about the failure of Germany's bid for world power; her leaders simply failed to play the excellent cards history placed in her hands. That, also, provides a lesson for the present.

The United States emerged as supreme from the two world wars as Britain had from the Napoleonic Wars, her economy stimulated rather

than debilitated by the conflict. That supremacy, like Britain's before, was temporary and relative, created by the eclipse of old competitors and the only gradual emergence of new ones. But while that supremacy lasted, the United States assumed a range of global commitments about which, in Kennedy's words, "Louis XIV or Palmerston would have felt a little nervous." By now, European, Soviet and Japanese recovery, together with the slower emergence of the People's Republic of China, has gradually reduced American ascendancy to that of *primus inter pares*.

Unlike Toynbee or Spengler, Kennedy does not conclude that the West is doomed to cyclical decay. Indeed at one level his whole work is a paean to the free-market competitive system which produced not only the armaments but the enterprise that the United States inherited in such abundant measure from a Europe that had used it to overwhelm more sluggish empires and conquer the world. What the United States needs, he concludes, is the wisdom to recognize its economic problems, the will to come to terms with them, and the kind of political skills that in the past have enabled lesser powers to maximize their advantages and minimize their defects. ♦

LITERATURE

Lives of the Poets

VOICES & VISIONS: THE POET IN AMERICA. Edited by Helen Vendler. *Random House. 528 pp.*

Reviewed by Joel Conarroe

This immense volume of essays is designed as a companion to a public-television series of one-hour programs affectionately referred to in the country's English departments as "Movies About Dead Poets." In addition to constituting a useful history of American verse, from Emily Dickinson to Sylvia Plath, the book is a veritable anthology, all but one of its 13 poets (T.S. Eliot, whose estate is grudging about granting permissions) represented by extensive quotations. The nearly 200 photographs and illustrations, moreover, offer riches in abundance for those persuaded that pictures are indeed more telling than words.

The films themselves, combining biographical information with critical commentary by knowledgeable critics and cultural historians, are entertaining, instructive and uneven. The most effective—on Robert Frost, Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams and Sylvia Plath—feature recordings of the poet's voice imaginatively fused with appropriate visual imagery. As for the writers who lived in less technically sophisticated times, "Walt Whitman" has the benefit of poet Galway Kinnell's riveting delivery of the verse but also, in a directorial miscalculation, introduces a bewhiskered actor impersonating the bard. "Emily Dickinson" does a nice job of recreating the social and intellectual milieu from which the poet emerged, but actress Jane Alexander's flat recitation of the poetry saps all vitality from the film and makes one yearn for Claire Bloom's luminous *Belle of Amherst*, a recent play also about Dickinson.

The Williams film, though occasionally arty in a way the poet never was, features not only the poet's own inimitable voice but also a moving recitation by Allen Ginsberg. "Wallace Stevens," too, has the benefit of readings by a living poet, James Merrill, most of which are mercifully spared musical underscoring. Other of the films are also enhanced by the inclusion of living poets, including Joseph Brodsky, Mark Strand, Adrienne Rich, Richard Howard, Richard Wilbur, Derek Walcott, Seamus Heaney, Robert Hass and Octavio Paz—an impressive galaxy of singers indeed.

Like the films they supplement, the book's 13 essays are uneven, some considerably more readable than others. I especially like Calvin Bedient's "Whitman," with its engaging critical voice: "Laid end to end, Whitman's long lines would form their own virtual transcontinental railroad, and the locomotive and cars to boot, and varied sights along the way." Allan Williamson's intelligent but awkwardly written essay on Hart Crane, by contrast, needs editing. Helen McNeil, in an arid piece on Elizabeth Bishop, doesn't mention her subject's often destructive personal relationships, though they were hardly irrelevant to the poet's seemingly impersonal art.

Obviously, one way to deal with volatile material is to ignore it, and hence in an otherwise dazzling essay on Ezra Pound, Hugh Kenner, one of the greatest U.S. critics, approaches the poet's anti-Semitism and the controversies that swirled around his life by saying nothing at all. "The emphasis belongs where I keep it," he insists, "on the continuities of the life of the mind and on the pleasures of his craggy texts." But can a craggy text ever be totally divorced from the craggy views that produced it? The Pound film, as it happens, by introducing Alfred Kazin as a kind of prosecuting attorney, offers a more balanced view of the poet.

Harvard University literature professor and *New Yorker* magazine poetry critic Helen Vendler, who provides a lively preface in her role as the collection's editor, also contributes an introduction to Wallace Stevens that is passionate, lucid and filled with persuasive readings. I also admire Richard B. Sewall on Emily Dickinson, John Slatin on Marianne Moore and Vereen Bell on Robert Lowell. Richard Poirier, Robert Frost's best reader, offers a stirring brief essay marred only by a slightly defensive tone—as if it were still necessary to persuade us that Frost is to be taken as seriously as Eliot and Williams are.

What we have here, then, is a plump volume filled with pictures and poems, with prose that is sometimes elegant and sometimes wooden, with dull observations and keen analyses. Like the American poets they illuminate, these essays, if sometimes disappointing, offer much to delight in. For those who enjoy booking passage to the realms of gold, *Voices and Visions* will be an erratic but frequently quite valuable traveling companion. ♦

The author of books about William Carlos Williams and John Berryman, Joel Conarroe is president of the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, which awards fellowships in the fine arts.

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BIOGRAPHY

The Wright Life

MANY MASKS: A LIFE OF FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT. By Brendan Gill. *Putnam. 544 pp.*

Reviewed by Thomas Hines

The life and work of Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959) have always seemed to call for the epic treatment. Ideally Wright deserves a multi-volumed critical biography of the scope of Leon Edel's study of Henry James.

Periodically, however, brave souls do make valiant stabs at biographical synthesis, the latest of whom is Brendan Gill, who has previously written biographies of Cole Porter and Tallulah Bankhead. A pillar at *The New Yorker* for over 50 years, Gill recently moved from his long-held post as drama critic to the magazine's "Sky Line" column as architectural pundit.

Despite some weaknesses—meager documentation and a sometimes breezy style of presentation that is not appropriate for an artist of Wright's profundity—Gill's book is the best and most engaging assessment to date of Wright's overall career. It succeeds in the difficult mission of introducing Wright to a lay audience and of offering new information and fresh insights to the experts. The latter achievement is a result, in part, of the author's close friendship with Wright and of his tapping of original sources unexploited by previous biographers. While the book eschews, to its detriment, the vital connections between Wright's work and the larger issues of 20th-century culture, it is, on the whole, a penetrating analysis of Wright's achievement.

Better than any Wright interpreter before him, Gill, the drama critic, sees the drama in Wright's saga, hears the good lines, spotlights the key entrances and exits, and illuminates the tension in Wright's life between the comic and the tragic. As a youth, Wright lived in a variety of settings, from the Wisconsin farm of his mother's relatives to the various towns in the East and Middle West where his father worked as a minister. Never graduating from either secondary school or college, Wright left the University of Wisconsin in the late 1880s to seek his fortune in Chicago. In the neighboring suburb of Oak Park he married and had six children; in 1909, when he was just over 40, he eloped to Europe with a married client, Mamah Cheney. With neither of the deserted spouses being willing to grant a divorce, Wright and Mamah escaped the scorn of their scandalized neighbors by retreating to Wright's ancestral Wisconsin farm, where he built his great house, Taliesin, in 1912.

During this time, Wright continued to commute to Chicago to supervise his dwindling number of commissions, and in 1914, while working on the Midway Gardens, he was summoned home to confront an extraordinary calamity. A demented servant had murdered Mamah, two of her visiting children, and several other staff members, and then had burned the house. Though he rebuilt Taliesin, Wisconsin and the Middle West now held too many painful memories, and Wright yielded to the impulse to get away to the sunnier climes of Japan and California.

Gill's sensitive handling of this complex personal drama carries over into his interpretation of the buildings. The Larkin Building in Buffalo, New York, he writes, "was designed to dominate and lend an air of grandeur to the quite ordinary factory buildings that made up the rest of the Larkin complex. The facade on Seneca Street rose skyward like some pagan temple carved millennia ago out of the rocky banks of the upper Nile."

Gill's sense of humor also retrieves, as no previous writer has done, the architect's own delicious wit, as well as the things he did and said that were not intentionally funny. Gill is attentive to the twinkle in the eye, the precocious child, the impish Mozartean playfulness. "You know," Wright once said to a Taliesin visitor, "a perfect democracy flourishes here at the



Wright's "Falling Water" house, 1935.

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Architectural historian Thomas Hines teaches at UCLA.

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From *The New Criterion*.

fellowship. When I get hungry, we all eat." Not easily awed by heads of state, Wright quickly and characteristically assumed a first-name intimacy with them; when he first met President Roosevelt in Washington in the late 1930s, he addressed him not just as Franklin, but as Frank. "Frank," he said upon entering the Oval Office, "you ought to get up out of that chair and look around at what they're doing to your city here, miles and miles of Ionic and Corinthian columns."

Yet Gill is also convincingly sympathetic to the difficult and frequently tragic sides of Wright's nature. He courageously takes on the Taliesin cult, presided over until recently by Wright's late widow and third wife, Olgivanna. By denying Wright's faults, she made him less believable as an artist and human being. Gill balances that distortion by revealing Wright's frailties, and hence allowing us to appreciate his humanity and his genius more fully. He has built much of his story on the unacknowledged research of scholars who have established incontestably that Wright lied about innumerable things throughout his life, including most notoriously the year in which he was born. It was 1867, not 1869, as Wright claimed most of his life. "He was a virtuoso at bearing false witness," Gill believes, "which is to say that he sometimes lied in the name of self-promotion and at other times he seems to have lied simply for the pleasure it gave him."

Part of Wright's secret in coping with life and work derived from the fact that he remained, in Gill's words, "invincibly youthful in spirit and that...youthfulness sustained him through many a dark passage. He would leap out of bed in the morning convinced that some unlooked-for good fortune was just about to provide a single happy solution to his multiplicity of problems; if, by nightfall, the solution had not arrived, tomorrow was another day. Meanwhile, there was the inescapable Protestant obligation to keep oneself busy."

Gill's appreciation of Wright's genius does not prevent him from finding problems in Wright's architecture. In making his artistic statement, Wright did frequently impose his will in a way that intimidated while it excited. Indeed, to many of the original and subsequent owners of his buildings, Gill suggests, Wright "exists as a sort of invisible resident despot, whose disapproval they dread incurring." Wright's work could never have been accused of being "contexturalist" or "preservationist," two values highly prized during the time Gill was writing his book. Instead, "Wright felt an irritated impatience with the past....[T]here was scarcely a building since Nineveh that Wright wouldn't have rejoiced to knock down in order to put one of his own in its place." He pretended, Gill quips, "all his life to admire nature, but what he liked was to alter it."

Though Gill deals sensitively with the tragic element in Wright's personal life, he is unable to appreciate sufficiently evidence of the same tragic sense in his architecture. Much that Wright designed became art despite its occasional functional lapses and its frequently expressionistic formidability. Gill's views on Wingspread (1937), the Herbert Johnson house in Racine, Wisconsin, illustrate his somewhat limited perspective in this regard. The house, Gill notes, "bespeaks a technical bravado—instead of the cozy domesticity that Wright was so eloquent a champion of in his small houses."

Gill is impressive in his analysis of many aspects of Wright's life and work, but he does not press sufficiently Wright's connections with the larger international architectural culture. He offers illuminating comparisons of Wright's Prairie period with the Viennese *Secessionstil* of Otto Wagner and Josef Olbrich, particularly in the similarities between the Larkin Building and Unity Temple in Oak Park and Olbrich's contemporaneous Secession Building in Vienna.

Wright's passion for Japanese and German culture raises the question, not dealt with by Gill, of what exactly Wright, and his Chicago mentor Louis Sullivan before him, meant when they referred to a "democratic architecture." If "democracy" refers to activities "of, for and by the people," very few great buildings designed by architects can be given that label. Architecture, at its best, is frequently "of" and "for" the "people," but seldom "by" them except in "folk" and "vernacular" expressions. The situation is analogous to the less often asked questions about a "democratic" medicine. The best physicians indeed "consult" their patients and try to involve them in the healing process, but responsible surgery, like responsible architecture, is seldom performed "by" the people paying for it. Wright and Sullivan never faced up to such facts rhetorically, though their sometimes imperious attitudes to clients acknowledged it implicitly.

"Whatever his career may have cost others in suffering," Gill concludes, "it strikes us now as producing a gift to the world that far outweighs the persistent, outrageous selfishness of the giver—a gift that transforms his selfishness into generosity." *Many Masks* is the right title for this book. "The key to wearing a mask successfully," Gill insists, "is of course to be aware at every moment that it is indeed a mask, and Wright never faltered in that respect; the adornment of his person, like the eloquence of his speech [and architecture] was simultaneously who he was and who he pretended to be."

Early in his life Wright had opted for "honest arrogance" over dishonest humility. Yet ultimately even he may have undervalued his stature. He *was* the greatest of American architects—this wearer of many masks, who accomplished miracles. ♦

CINEMA

Huston's Last Film

Reviewed by David Denby

The Dead, John Huston's beautiful final film—an adaptation of James Joyce's great story from *Dubliners*—has a strange, uncentered dramatic form that seems to leave its

David Denby is *New York* magazine's movie critic. Filmmaker John Huston, the director of such American classics as *The Maltese Falcon*, *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* and *The African Queen*, died in 1987 shortly after completing work on *The Dead*.

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audience hushed, even stunned at the end. Some of these quiet moviegoers, I assume, are moved, but others may be just baffled. Huston's adaptation, done in collaboration with his son, Tony, who wrote the screenplay, is faithful to Joyce in many ways, but in one essential way—the spirit animating the entire action—it differs radically. The loving hand that Huston has brought to the story may, paradoxically, be causing the puzzlement.

"The Dead" is a work of many marvels, and one of them is the way Joyce makes the hero's most ordinary social experience a matter of inescapable subjectivity. Gabriel Conroy, a university professor and newspaper book reviewer, is by no means a bad fellow. But at the elaborate after-Christmas party given by his elderly spinster aunts, Gabriel worries about the impression he is making on the other guests, particularly the young women; he worries about the foolish speech he has to deliver in praise of his aunts' hospitality. Even as he dispenses politeness and good cheer, he is irritably conscious of his niggling little hurts and resentments.

On the way home in a hansom cab (it is 1904), he is seized with longing for his wife, Gretta. For a happy moment, he hopes she will return his passion. But when they arrive at their hotel room, he undergoes an extreme and entirely unexpected mortification. He has paid Gretta little attention at the party, though he had seen her pause on the stairway as they were leaving, rapturously listening to the tenor Bartell D'Arcy sing a traditional Irish melody, "The Lass of Aughrim." Now, in the hotel room, he discovers that "The Lass of Aughrim" was once sung by her long-dead lover, a boy named Michael Furey, who had stood in the cold rain outside her window and perished soon after from consumption. Gabriel is shocked. "A shameful consciousness of his own person assailed him. He saw himself as a ludicrous figure, acting as a pennyboy for his aunts, a nervous, well-meaning sentimentalist, orating to vulgarians and idealizing his own clownish lusts...."



Film director John Huston.

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And on through the poignant and grief-stricken final pages of the story, bitterly eloquent pages that are perhaps without equal in all of English literature. Gabriel's self-absorption and petty egotism—it is no different from what any of us feel—have led him to this pass of utter nullity. The end of the story may hold out a small hope of rebirth for him—it is a matter of opinion.

Huston doesn't enter Gabriel's thoughts during the party. We see him—a stern looking, fortyish man in evening clothes—as only the most important and sympathetic of the guests; his peevish self-consciousness gets blended into the other characters' foibles. This part of the movie is told objectively, and in the third person. People arrive, take off their coats, greet their friends, drink, dance, listen to someone playing the piano and someone else reciting poetry. Finally, they all sit down to eat the goose that Gabriel has expertly carved. The party is a warmly bustling affair, both ceremonious and informal, and Gabriel, in the middle of it, carries out his social duties faithfully. But he is obviously uneasy, with an edge of contempt whose meaning is hard to read.

Donal McCann, the great Irish actor who plays Gabriel, is pale, rather saturnine, with intensely focused dark eyes. His manner—ironic, self-satirical—suggests high intelligence, and we're drawn to him because we, too, are slightly bored by the effusive party. As Gretta, Anjelica Huston, the director's daughter, is perhaps taller and more singular in appearance than Joyce intended, but that is hardly a fault; she gives a fine, entirely disciplined performance. Throughout the party, she appears distant, abstracted in thought, gazing to the side like a distinguished great lady in an old portrait. In the hotel room, we seem to be hearing her voice for the first time, and her emotion is a jolt for us as well as for Gabriel.

The party itself is a smooth and beautiful piece of filmmaking. Huston shifts effortlessly from one group to another, directing the kind of ensemble effort that is analogous to a piece of chamber music in which the single instruments play now alone, now in combination, parting, joining again, in a seamless flow of melody. There are many small crises, many temporary centers of minor concern. Will the incorrigible Freddy Malins (Donal Donnelly), son of the awful old tyrant Mrs. Malins (Marie Kean), show up drunk? He does, and remains a source of high and low comedy. Huston's attention is light, unemphatic, yet full enough for us to judge the degree of intimacy and distance among a wide circle of acquaintances.

The very fine cast of Irish actors speaks Joyce's dialogue in English of great purity. In all, Huston, may have never worked with this much ease and warmth before. In a daring use of real time, he pauses for the length of a recitation, an aria, an argument over old opera singers. As we watch, we may think that the genteel partygoers, with their singing and reciting, may be a little frayed or even absurd but that the party has a fullness of life that shames our own more pinched conception of social behavior. Clearly, Huston believes in the value of what he shows us so elaborately. He indulges undramatic episodes because they soar as actors' material.

But the warmth of Huston's treatment is precisely what throws off the unsuspecting audience. For when Gabriel comes to his great and bitter realization and the movie shifts to internal monologue, with Donal McCann standing at the hotel window and looking out at the falling snow as he speaks Joyce's staggering final words, the inclusiveness of his sorrow, not only for himself but for everyone, seems exaggerated, even disconnected. For the happily fleshed-out characters we have been watching were

charged, vibrant—far from dead.

On the page, Joyce's account of the party is, well, deadpan—colder, drier with small hints of disapproval. Joyce himself hated the suffocating bourgeois rituals of Dublin; it was parties like these, with their sentimental nostalgia, their utter conventionality, that he was running from (he ran all the way to the Continent and did not return). The point of his title, as the story makes clear, is that they are *all* dead—not just Gabriel or his ancient Aunt Julia or the sad Gretta, thinking of her long-ago lover, but all of them. The charming way that Huston has staged the party, with great actors grabbing avidly at their lines, makes that devastating judgment impossible, inconceivable, and so Gabriel's monologue, marvelously delivered as it is, in the softest, bitterest tones of grief, is essentially left hanging. Perhaps we are more generous and forgiving than the young Joyce. ♦

ECONOMICS

The Oldest Social Science

THE NEW PALGRAVE: A DICTIONARY OF ECONOMICS. Edited by John Eatwell, Murray Milgate and Peter Newman. *Stockton Press. 4194 pp.*

Reviewed by David R. Henderson

Poll 10 economists on an economic question and you'll get at least 10 opinions: that's conventional wisdom. It is also wrong. Economists are not the fractious bunch of equivocators that many people imagine. On many issues—for example, the net decrease in global wealth caused by trade restrictions—economists are virtually unanimous; it's noneconomists who keep the battle raging. Even on controversial issues economists' differences are often narrower than most people believe. After 200 years, the oldest social science has sorted out many of the big questions.

That surprising message comes through loud and clear in a remarkable work called *The New Palgrave: A Dictionary of Economics*, four volumes comprising 4194 pages and treating 1916 entries. *The New Palgrave* represents the efforts of more than 900 contributors and three editors—John Eatwell of Trinity College, Cambridge University; Murray Milgate of Harvard University; and Peter Newman of Johns Hopkins University—who spent four years assembling it. It weighs nine kilograms.

Despite its billing, *The New Palgrave* is not a dictionary. (The name honors R.H. Inglis Palgrave, an Englishman who published his *Dictionary of Political Economy* in the 1890s.) It is an encyclopedia full of reasoned—and often highly technical—arguments, written by economists who are experts on their subjects. The article on quantity theory of money (often called monetarism), one of the longest at about 20,000 words, is by Milton Friedman, who won the Nobel Prize partly for his work on that subject. The article on input-output analysis of national economies, the achievement that earned Wassily Leontief his Nobel, is by Leontief. If you need a quick definition of *gross national product*, consult a textbook; *The New Palgrave* doesn't even contain an entry on that term. But as a sophisticated guide to the state of economic thinking, this work is unmatched.

On one of the most contentious economic issues in the world, the feasibility of central economic planning by government, the consensus among economists is striking. Friedrich von Hayek, who won the Nobel Prize in 1974, claimed that government planners could never successfully replace the free market because they could never know what prices to set for the millions of goods that a large, complex economy produces. When Hayek first elaborated his idea in the 1930s and '40s, it was a minority viewpoint. Today the majority agree with it. In the entry on socialism, for example, Alec Nove, an expert on the Soviet economy and by no means an adherent of the free market, states, "No socialist should deny the need for economic calculations. With no price mechanism [read "market"] it is not possible to calculate or compare cost, or to measure the intensity of wants." John Kenneth Galbraith—can it be?—states that price controls on food in Africa have been a major cause of famine.

Even more striking is the admission by socialist economist Robert L. Heilbroner that the free market is necessary for freedom in general. He writes in his entry on capitalism that it is "a system of social domination" in which "all profits depend ultimately on inequality of economic position." Capitalists' power, he writes, stems from their ability to withhold their property from the use of society. But in the same article Heilbroner does an about-face. He points out that laborers have the same power to withhold their labor. This property right in their labor, says Heilbroner, spells "emancipation" for laborers. He writes, "The greatest achievements of human liberty thus far attained in organized society have been achieved in certain advanced capitalist societies." This consensus on the failures of socialism and on the virtues of the free market cannot be attributed to editorial bias. Eatwell, the lead editor, is an economic adviser to Neil Kinnock, leader of Britain's Labour Party. Co-editor Milgate was Eatwell's student.

Something I have always loved about economics is how a little clear economic reasoning can lead to surprising conclusions. *The New Palgrave* is full of such examples. For instance, David Friedman (Milton's son), in illustrating how economists analyze the effects of laws, considers a hypothetical law requiring landlords to give tenants three months' notice before evicting them. The conclusion that such a law would benefit tenants is obvious—and false. Friedman notes that the law would make rental housing more attractive, raising demand. It would also raise landlords' costs of providing rental housing. The net

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result would be higher rents on more secure housing, frustrating the wishes of tenants who would prefer a lower rent and less security.

In addition to essays on economic terms, policies and theories, *The New Palgrave* includes 655 biographies of economists. My favorite is Alan Walters's entry on Milton Friedman. Often an economist chooses a specialty not because he is fascinated by it but because it gives him an excuse to use the analytic tools he has mastered. Not Friedman. Walters tells how Friedman's characteristic approach



Nine kilos of economic thought.

© 1988 Lisa Bogdan

was to develop the tools needed to analyze issues that interested him. As a statistician during World War II, for example, Friedman and colleagues figured out that the method being used to test ammunition for defects was wasteful. Rather than testing a given number of bullets, they concluded, the testers should stop as soon as their sampling had established a predetermined level of confidence. Friedman's work became the basis of the statistical technique now called sequential sampling. Having solved the problem, Friedman had no desire to sharpen the theoretical knife further; he moved on to more pressing concerns.

MIT's Stanley Fischer, in his entry on Paul Samuelson, writes that at a party given for Samuelson in 1983, fellow economist Franco Modigliani went over to the guest of honor, wagged his finger at him, and said "You [pause] you have enriched our lives." So have the editors of *The New Palgrave*. ♦

THEATER

A Critic's Vision

WHO NEEDS THEATRE: DRAMATIC OPINIONS. By Robert Brustein. *The Atlantic Monthly Press. 320 pp.*

Reviewed by Julius Novick

There are all sorts of people who could be described as theater critics, including, I suspect, some who are far too busy thinking about the theater to go to it very often. But to most of us the term suggests someone who sends back frequent bulletins from the actual field of play, usually to some daily or weekly newspaper or magazine. Such critics are despised in certain academic circles as mere "reviewers" or "journalists," but they are the ones who can bring us the vividness of the immediate theatrical moment as well as the context of art and society of which the moment is a part. Most of them, of course, do no such thing; most, in any generation, are hacks. Let us leave them out of account. The ones worth talking about, in the English-speaking world anyhow, fall into two categories, which I shall call the eclectic and the polemic.

The eclectic critic finds value (though not necessarily equal value) in virtually all kinds of theater; he seeks to show that every kind can be done well or badly. The polemic critic, on the other hand, believes that some kinds of theater are essentially good and some kinds are essentially bad, and that his sacred duty is to fight for the former against the latter. The eclectic critic on a bad day is prone to complacency and blandness; the polemic critic, to narrowness and self-righteousness. Among the eclectic critics were Max Beerbohm (who could write with equal authority, and equal sympathy, about a Greek tragedy performed in Greek by schoolboys and about a celebrated low comedian of the music halls) and Harold Clurman. Polemic critics have included George Bernard Shaw (still the greatest of all theater critics), Kenneth Tynan, Eric Bentley, Walter Kerr (still abominated by Bentley's partisans) and Robert Brustein. Brustein, who returned to the journalistic fray in 1980 after several years during which his writing was, as he says, "desultory and occasional," has just brought out his latest collection of reviews and other essays. They are invigorated, as always, by the special urgency of Brustein's sense of struggle.

Who Needs Theatre?, asks the title of his new book. Robert Brustein, founder of both the Yale Repertory Theatre and the American Repertory Theatre, needs theater. It is, as he says, "my obsession, my daemon." His love of the theatricality of the theater flashes out in occasional fine descriptions of actors acting, but essentially the theater matters to him because of its relationship to society. It matters because it is a moral force, or damn well ought to be. It matters because it is the chosen battlefield on which he fights the Good Fight.

The late Richard Watts Jr., a longtime drama critic for several New York newspapers, used to refer to theater critics as the Friendly Sons of Aristotle. Brustein in his critical persona has never been particularly friendly, and he is less a son of Aristotle than of Jeremiah. If society is corrupt, then it is the duty of art to take up an adversary position towards it. This familiar modernist imperative is congenial to Brustein's angry temperament. He praises Bertolt Brecht and "his cold, his mean, his merciless art." He writes affectionately of Lillian Hellman, who believed that the theater "could be a vehicle for...sharp incisions into the diseased body of a corrupted society." Contemporary playwright David Mamet, in *Glengarry Glen Ross*, has uncovered "powerful tensions" that "pick the scabs off a lot of ancient half-healed wounds."

Julius Novick, a theater critic for The Village Voice, *teaches drama at the State University of New York at Purchase.*

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Brustein admires West German playwright Franz Xaver Kroetz for writing "laborious documentaries of man's inhumanity to man (more often, to women), making no concessions either to theatricality or to the pleasure principle—grimly squalid vignettes of humanity in extreme circumstances, a poetry of esthetic abstinence." He declares enthusiastically that Philip Glass and Robert Wilson's opera "*Einstein on the Beach* manages to burrow into your mind and work on you like a wound," and that "Philip Glass is a composer who drives musical nails into your soul."

Robert Brustein sure does know how to have fun! His book is full of praise for artists who enact his fantasies of hostility against society and against society's representative, the audience.

By the same token, he is suspicious of theater that is too nice to its audience, too easy to like; deaf to its appeal, he doesn't like it. He is not interested in the sensuality or the glamor of the theater, nor is he much affected by the opportunities it offers for release through laughter or tears, nor does he relish its little complicities of recognition. Ease, grace, fluidity to him are signs of glibness and dishonesty. He is a puritan, with the familiar limitations of outlook to which puritans are subject.

But perhaps the theater needs its puritans as much as the church does. Brustein, at any rate, is polemic but not doctrinaire; he has maintained his independence from political and esthetic bandwagons. Sickened by the crassness and hypocrisy of the entrenched commercial theater (his first book of reviews was called *Seasons of Discontent*), he was then deeply disappointed by the yahooism of the opposing counterculture. He has looked for salvation not to any movement but to individuals who satisfied his demands for a rigorous art, a *Third Theatre* (the title of his second collection).

This has left him, in spite of his enormous influence, with a sense of isolation that sometimes, even in the current book, expresses itself in a tone of grouchy self-pity: "At the risk of magnifying a growing reputation for perverseness, let me enter my customary dissent." Recently, however, Brustein has shown distinct signs of mellowing, which helps to keep this book from being a replay of its predecessors. Perhaps the success of his American Repertory Theatre, founded in 1980 in Boston and dedicated to practicing what he preaches, has cheered him up. He has by no means resigned his membership in the Unfriendly Sons of Jeremiah, and still has prophetic thunderbolts to hurl, but often now, instead of summarily and self-righteously denouncing someone for selling out, he will reflect with shrewd sympathy on how difficult it is, in our contemporary Vanity Fair, for a theater artist to fulfill his potential, to remain uncompromised.

His sense of isolation has been significantly allayed; his happy few has become quite a crowd. There are warm, laudatory reviews for such American playwrights as David Mamet, David Rabe, Marsha Norman, Wallace Shawn, Christopher Durang and Keith Reddin, and admiration more briefly expressed for Sam Shepard, Ronald Ribman and Arthur Kopit. "So the next time you hear someone ask, 'Where are the American playwrights?' tell him, 'They're here.'" He hails the "auteur directors" Robert Wilson, Martha Clarke [see *Review* 3/88] and three Rumanian directors now working in the United States, Andrei Serban, Liviu Ciulei and Lucian Pintilie. He actually comes before us in the preface to this book and proclaims, without qualification, "a theatrical renaissance."

I remain unconvinced by his rosy assessment: if this is the Renaissance, bring back the Middle Ages, or bring on the baroque! But that is not the point. It is an old and stupid game to judge a critic merely according to how well he agrees with one's infallible self. As Brustein himself says, "We prefer George Bernard Shaw to a critic with a better box score not just because of his prose style but because he wrote out of conviction. He had a vision of theater larger than his estimate of individual plays. He had a sense of culture that transcended his personal vanity." Brustein, too, writes out of conviction, has a vision of theater and a sense of culture. His sense of culture is keen as well as crabby, and his vision of theater is a noble one:

> The kind of theatre I advocate is clear, I hope, in this book. It is theatre allied to a collective ideal, associated with training, organic in nature, continuous in operation, permanent in status. It is theatre that connects itself to the soul, mind, emotions of the audience, to the public and private life of the polity. It is a theatre that has as its goal not profits and deals but artistic fulfillment, not the advancement of careers but of talent, to be the springboard not for opportunism but of spiritual development and growth. It is a theatre of danger, dreams, surprise, adventure, a theatre of the unexpected and the unknown. ♦

ART

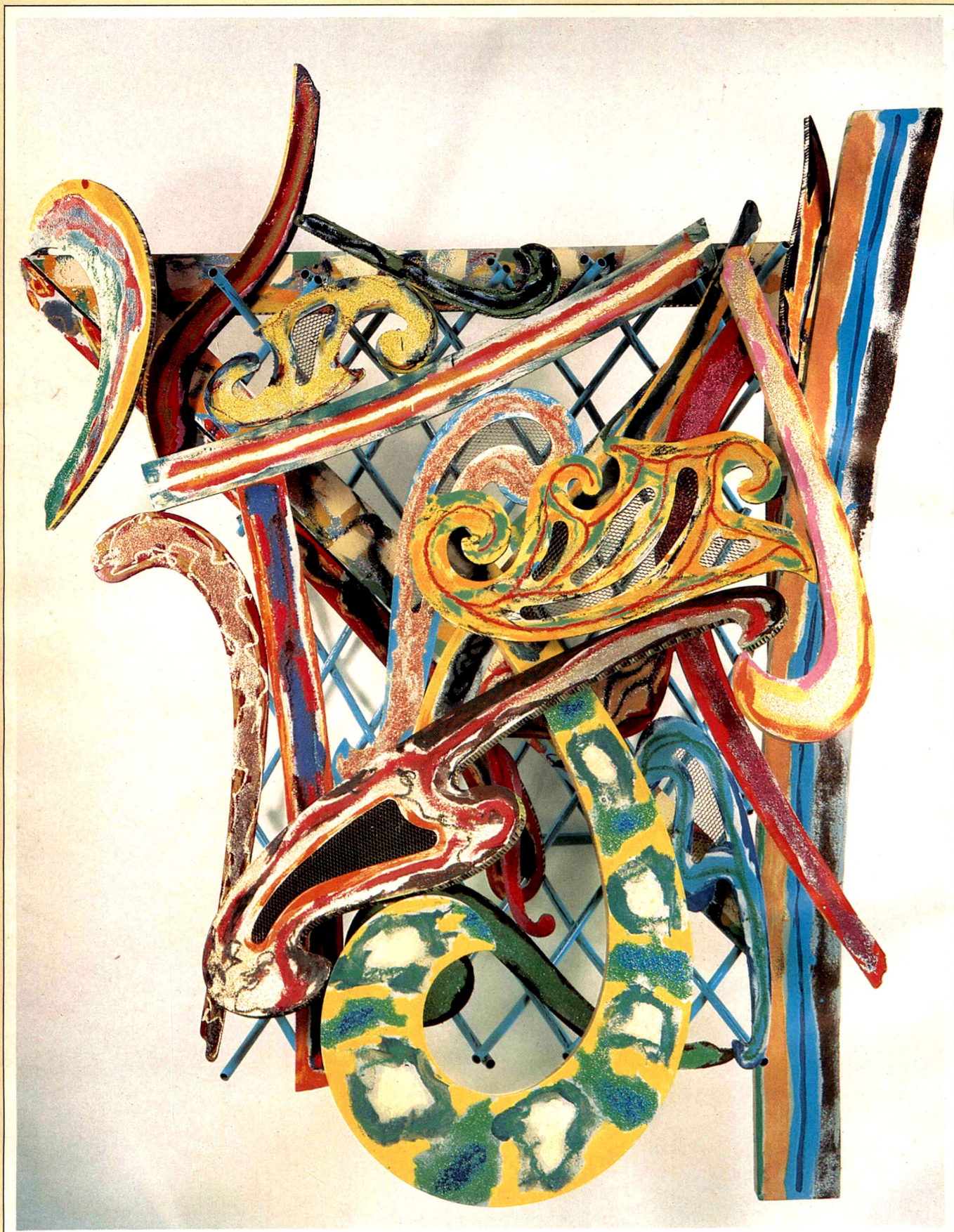
Stella in Relief

Reviewed by Adam Gopnik

Frank Stella's painted reliefs at the Museum of Modern Art in New York are fancy art—the fanciest art that MOMA has ever shown with so much institutional confidence. The materialism—the joyful *thingness*—of Stella's reliefs is more insistent than that of almost any other modern painting. Though many of the best

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"Ram gangra" by Frank Stella, 1978 (Indian Bird Series).

Collection: Mr. and Mrs. Victor W. Ganz
© 1988 Steven Sloman, courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art

reliefs have been named after exotic, refined, Matissean birds ("Steller's Albatross," "Dove of Tanna"), they look more like the nests of very large city pigeons with very loud taste—birds who have been terrorizing Canal Street antique shops, filching Lucite curves and shop-front grilles, cannibalizing discarded Christmas trees for their glitter and tinsel, and weaving all this stuff together with the tubes from old jukeboxes.

The museum's exhibition is curated by William Rubin, MOMA's director of painting and sculpture, who put together a retrospective of Stella's early, minimalist paintings in 1970. The new show includes examples of 11 of the 12 series of reliefs Stella has made since: the geometric and relatively conservative "Polish Village" and "Diderot" series, the more freely painted "Brazilians," the flamboyant and playful "Exotic Birds" and "Indian Birds"—still in many ways the most sensual and appealing of all the reliefs—and the "Circuits," "Shards," "Maltas," "South African Mines," "Cones and Pillars" and "Waves" series. (The "Waves" series is only a few months older than the show itself.)

The intense energy of these reliefs is impressive. It's a material energy that we like to think of as American, but it's the energy of kitsch detritus rather than the (by now) more acceptable energy of skyscrapers or billboards. (In some ways, the previous American art that Stella's most resembles is the pressed-car reliefs of sculptor John Chamberlain.) But Stella's art remains exhilarating in a way that mere assemblages of kitsch (whether they're straightforward, like Chamberlain's, or arty, like painter Julian Schnabel's) can't because of an underlying counterpoint. People who like Stella's work are always demonstrating how, despite its congested surfaces, it is in fact rule-bound and methodical. Any art can be rule-bound and methodical, though, including most bad art. What makes Stella's method so remarkable is that the difference between the pictures' structure and their surfaces is so extreme....

In the reliefs, Stella manages to be at once an academic and a rebel—both the best student in the class and the worst truant—and that polarity keeps his art from ever being boring. The scholarly echoes of Rubens in the reliefs aren't just serendipitous. As everyone knows who has read Stella's remarkable 1986 book on the relationship between the baroque and the modern, *Working Space*, he believes that modern abstraction might find some inspiration by studying the pictorial space of 17th-century baroque painting—by recovering its feeling for continuous movement, its love of solid forms that jump out at the viewer, its use of curves and spirals, even its attachment to conventionalized imagery and rhetorical gesture. These seem to Stella a necessary antidote to the impoverished, meager and essentially neoclassical space that abstraction has inherited from Cubism....

The sheer, unapologetic fanciness of Stella's art—its frank and open embrace of everything decorative and material, its insistence on offering not just an arabesque but a two-meter-high arabesque, and not just a two-meter-high arabesque but a two-meter-high arabesque covered with bright red paint, yellow squiggles and glitter—makes a visitor to MOMA think in a new way about the relationship of decoration to abstraction. For, while abstract art is one of the few really new things our century has made, the guilty secret of abstract art may be that the elements of abstraction aren't new at all. What goes into abstract painting has often echoed the objects and patterns of the decorative arts. People made colored squares before Josef Albers, and pasted up expanses of line-and-block wallpaper before Mondrian (just as they admired irregular curves before Stella). The classic philistine response to abstract art—"Well, I don't know. To me, it just looks like pin-striped fabric" (or "an old drop cloth," or "needlepoint")—is, in a certain, unintended sense, correct. The story of abstract art is less a story of invention than one of discovery—of finding the hidden possibilities in things previously dismissed as trivial or low. But artists are no less sensitive about their grungy relations than anyone else, and back when abstraction was embattled, fighting for legitimacy, people who cared for it were understandably touchy about the connection of high abstraction to patterns and design—to *things*. A reflex set in among admirers of abstraction which insisted, against common sense, not only that abstract art was completely new but that its newness was the most important thing about it....

A hundred years ago, we looked for sensations in images; now we look for images in sensation. Abstract art can be as various as any other kind of art. It can show us what a higher realm and a better life look like, or give form to something base. But it can also just be real—truthful. As MOMA's William Rubin points out in his catalogue essay, Stella's work looks more like the world it comes from than does most other American painting that includes explicit "popular" imagery. For good or ill, the reliefs contentedly reflect the feeling and appearance of the New York of the 1970s and '80s as much as Mondrian reflected the feeling and appearance of the New York of the '40s. Stella's reliefs look like New York right now—like the garish paint on the subway cars, like the holiday lights on the Empire State Building. And the spiritual qualities of Stella's works—their greedy vitality, their materialism, their love of cheap sensation and their sneaking suspicion that maybe sensation isn't really so cheap after all (not to mention their essentially unheroic ambitions, even a certain complacency)—are *our* qualities and the qualities of our world. Stella's art contradicts the notion that the story of abstract art has been a story of endless search for novelty, and of ways of cutting off art from the world. Stella finds rich material in surprising places, and makes art that looks like itself and yet still looks like the world around it. His career suggests that abstract art can never be completely new, and that, when it's any good, it can never really be abstract. ♦

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